



THE YOUNG CRUSADERS
AT WASHINGTON

THE YOUNG CRUSADERS SERIES

BY

GEORGE P. ATWATER

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AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG CRUSADERS"



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TO
PHILIP, RICHARD
AND
ANNE MARIE

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The Young Crusaders at Washington

CHAPTER I

JOE'S GREAT IDEA

THE rhythmic tramp of a marching column resounded along the street, as a uniformed company of boys with rifles over their shoulders approached the open square of the city of Portage from the direction of the High School.

“Column right, march.”

As the command came sharply from the lips of Captain Tom Warren, the company turned into Laurel Avenue, the favorite street for drilling. Accuracy and briskness marked every movement of the well trained boys. They were the Young Crusaders, a military organization of the Portage High School, starting out on their weekly drill.

For an hour they marched and countermarched, executing the intricate manœuvres of the “School

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of the Company" in the Drill Regulations, and handling their guns with the ease of veterans.

It was a warm evening in July. The residents of Laurel Avenue, seated comfortably on their broad porches, and the passers-by enjoying an evening walk under the beautiful trees that lined the street, watched with interest the youthful soldiers. The company had made great progress since its organization the preceding November. The lines did not falter now when an unexpected command came. The well kept rifles were handled with vigor and precision.

When it grew dark the captain marched the company to the High School, in which a large basement room served as an armory and meeting place. With an injunction to remember the drill the following week, he said the word "Dismissed," and the boys hastened to put away their guns.

Captain Warren turned to the first lieutenant.

"Jimmie," he said, "we ought to do something beside drill at our meetings. We have had a good deal of that, and bad weather will come, when we shall not care to march out-of-doors."

Jimmie Harding, the boy addressed, was a splendid officer and capable leader; he was also captain of the High School football team.

"You are right, Tom," he replied. "Let us think it over. There are a good many things we might do, but we want the best."

"If we only had a gymnasium it would be fine. We have enough literary and debating clubs in the school. We need a place for our winter games."

"You are looking pretty far ahead, Tom, to be talking of winter sports on a warm night like this."

"We ought to be planning for them. Think it over."

Harding promised to do so. Tom, before leaving, sought out Mr. Kinsman, a teacher of the High School and warden of the Young Crusaders. He found him locking the cases in which the guns were kept.

"Mr. Kinsman, what are we to do during the winter?"

Mr. Kinsman laughed. He was impressed, as Jimmie had been, with the novelty of considering the winter program in July. Tom was serious, however, and Mr. Kinsman at once recognized the earnestness that made Warren a valuable leader.

"You have a long head, Tom. Indeed we ought to think about the winter's work now."

"I think we ought to have a place where we could play games, a sort of gymnasium, equipped with some simple apparatus."

"That's a good suggestion. Suppose we sleep over it. There, the last gun is stowed away. Good night, Tom."

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“Good night, sir.”

Tom went to his home that night with his head filled with plans for the winter.

The Young Crusaders had been organized the previous fall among the boys of the High School. They had held meetings each week under the direction of three men, called the wardens: Mr. Kinsman, Mr. Sumner, an attorney of Portage thoroughly versed in military tactics, and Mr. Jackson, a teacher in the school. They had secured uniforms and other equipment. Their splendid rifles were the gift of Colonel Russell, the uncle of Joe Russell, the bugler of the company. In June they had spent nearly three weeks camping on Colonel Russell's farm, ten miles from Portage.

“Camp Crusader,” as it was called, had been a great success. The love for the organization had become very deep with the boys during the days spent among the hills which bounded the peaceful valley. The camp had developed the spirit of loyalty and obedience, and the officers had been tested by the duties and responsibilities of their position. Upon return from the camp, the enthusiasm had continued.

Tom Warren was right, however. Plans for the future must be carefully laid, that the interest might be maintained. It was quite certain that another camp would be held the following year,

but in the interval there must be provision for other activities.

On the morning following the meeting, Tom Warren went to the home of his bosom friend, Joe Russell. Joe was a boy whose active mind was ever devising employment with which to occupy his ready hands. It was Joe who, the previous winter, had built an aeroplane, without an engine, and had made one memorable flight in it. Joe and Tom had likewise solved the puzzle of the cipher that Joe had found in the attic of Colonel Russell's house, and by so doing had brought to themselves some reward. Joe's resourcefulness seemed without limit, and Tom's good judgment, with Joe's zeal and inventiveness, were a combination of qualities that gave vigor as well as thoroughness to every project they undertook.

Joe was in the yard looking over the frame of a very large kite when Tom appeared on the sidewalk.

"Hello, Tom. I've been waiting for you to turn up. See that old kite? That kite is going to take a trip one of these days. It needs a lot of patching."

"Where did you get it?"

"I built it last year and put it up once. It fell into a tree and was about ready for the bone pile when I got it down. Come along," added Joe; "let's go to Uncle Russell's."

Colonel Russell lived on Laurel Avenue, but a short distance away. The large attic of the house was the boys' favorite retreat. With Colonel Russell's permission they had made it their workshop and play-room.

Joe led the way up the stairs from the side door of the house and they seated themselves on opposite sides of a large table which served as headquarters for the "Strategy Board," as Uncle Russell called the two boys. On the table was a various assortment of boyish treasures.

"Joe, you told me just after we came home from camp that you had a great idea. Have you still got it or have you sold it to the government?"

Joe knew Tom's tendency to poke quiet fun at his ideas, but he knew likewise that Tom was always ready to help him carry them out.

"I still have it and it's not for sale."

"I guess the government is too much occupied with the Panama Canal to undertake any other large project, eh, Joe?"

"You're right, Tom. It will take a good live bunch to carry out this idea and not a gang of Central American Hungarians. It's been boiling in my mind for several weeks."

"Let a little boil over, Joe, and I'll see if it is cooked enough to put up in jars."

"You know how we mixed concrete in camp for our monument?"

Tom nodded.

"Well, what's to prevent a fellow from building a mould, pouring in the concrete and getting a block any shape he wants?"

"Nothing is to prevent, Joe, except the lack of the mould, the lack of the materials and the lack of a place to do it and a few workmen. If we can get along without those things, we can do it right now, here on the table. It would save a lot of dirt."

"Stop your fooling, Tom, and get down to business. Do you think we could make concrete blocks?"

"Of course we could," was Warren's serious reply, "if we had the mould and the materials."

"How many could we make, — not indoors but out in the open?"

Tom laughed. "If we had time enough, we might make the public square full, with a little extra pile down Main Street. But I am somewhat disappointed in your idea, Joe. I thought surely it would be a phonograph that would work our problems in algebra for us, or a fishing rod that would whistle when we got a bite."

But Joe was not to be annoyed. He was in that mood where his thoughts were at fever heat. He arose, walked to the other end of the attic, looked for a moment out of the window and then suddenly turned and faced his comrade.

"Tom, why can't we build a gymnasium from concrete blocks? If we could," continued the enthusiastic boy to the startled listener, "we would be as proud as those old chaps that built the pyramids down in Egypt. What good is a pyramid beside a gymnasium? You can't play basket-ball in a pyramid. Pat McGuire told the teacher last term that he thought the pyramids were the tees used by the gods from Olympus when they stepped across the Mediterranean to play golf in Egypt. Pat stayed in half an hour for that. The teacher said they were tombs. Our gym would be for live ones, not for dead ones. Let's go and talk with Mr. Kinsman."

The boys left the house and hastened to Mr. Kinsman's rooms. By good luck they found him at home. He had encouraged the members of the company to come to his rooms whenever they wished to consult him.

"Hello, boys. What empire has the 'Strategy Board' planned to conquer this morning?"

Tom looked at Joe. It was Joe's idea and he ought to break the news.

"We have been thinking, Mr. Kinsman, that we ought to build a gymnasium and club-room for the Young Crusaders."

"Bless my heart! Of course you ought. I am surprised that you have neglected it so long. Almost two weeks have passed since you left camp,

and I have fully expected to see the roof on and the doors open by this time. You and Tom are decidedly lazy not to have built it in that attic and to have moved it right into the public square."

Both boys laughed. They knew Mr. Kinsman too well to be disturbed by his joking.

"But we really think we could do it ourselves, if all the boys would help."

"That is a big idea. Let's get a little bit of it at a time. Where would you build it?"

"We don't know, sir."

"Well, that's a definite answer at any rate. Who would provide the money?"

"Tom and I would help."

"Good! That is a start."

"We might not need much money. We could build it ourselves."

"Do you mean that the boys might actually construct it with their own hands?"

"Yes, sir."

"What material would you use, Joe?" and Mr. Kinsman asked the question so soberly that the boys knew that their idea was receiving serious consideration.

"Concrete blocks."

"And where would you get the concrete blocks?"

"We could make them ourselves."

Mr. Kinsman gasped. "Joe, you and Tom will

cross the ocean on a bridge some day if you set out about it. Let me think a minute."

He reached for a pad of paper and set down some figures. He studied them carefully for several minutes. Finally he looked up.

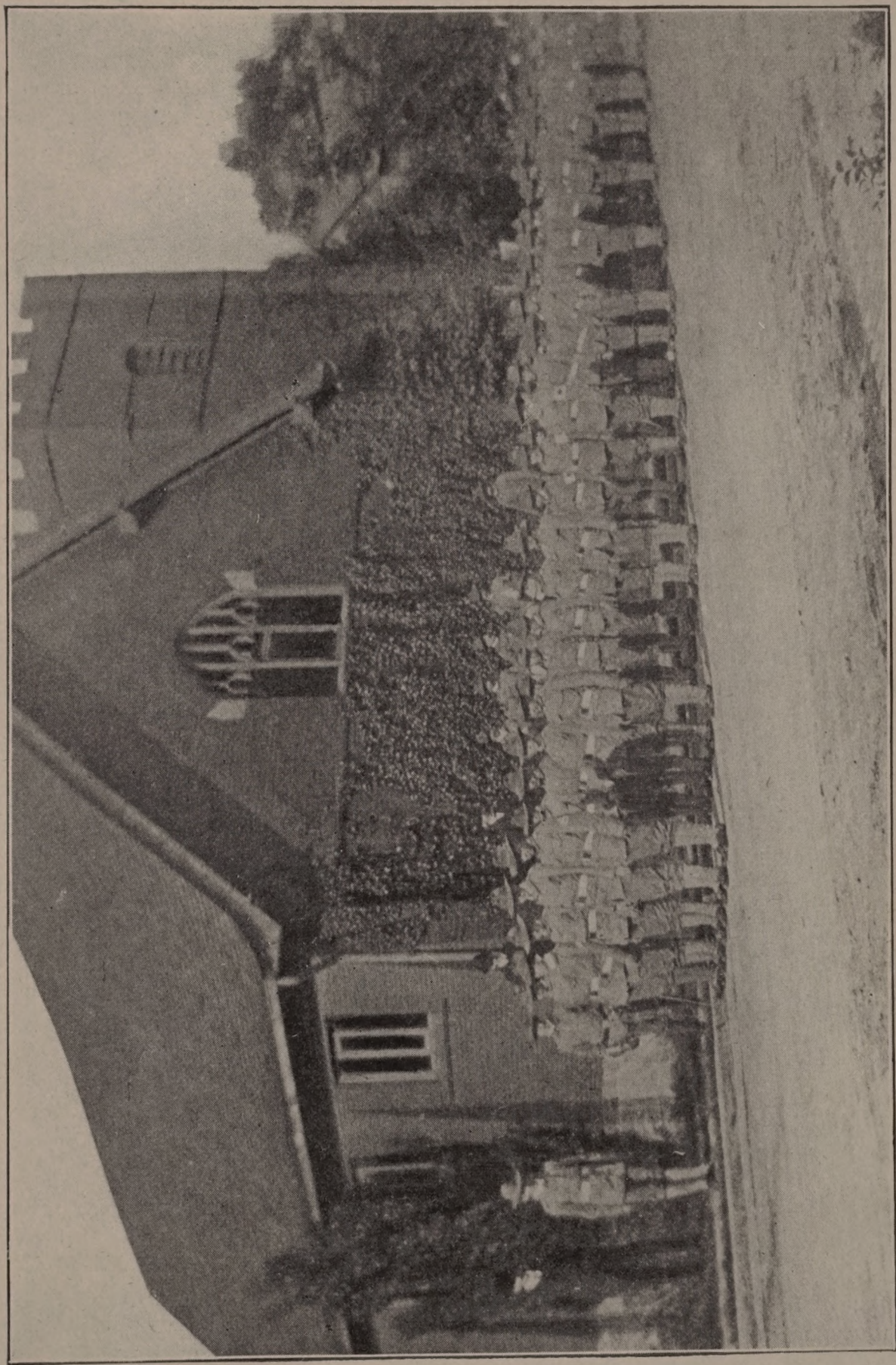
"I am afraid that a gymnasium built of home-made concrete blocks is too large a task, even for the Young Crusaders. But you have put an idea into my head. If you will ask the officers to meet me this evening, I may have something to suggest."

The boys hurried off to see the officers. In their enthusiasm they told the purpose of the meeting, and every officer promised to be present.

Joe and Tom were the first on hand. While waiting for the others, they examined Mr. Kinsman's books and pictures with fresh interest. One picture in particular always attracted them. It was a photograph of a massive college dormitory, whose open windows revealed groups of students lounging on broad window-seats. The walls of the building were mantled with ivy.

"Yes, that is old Kenyon," had been Mr. Kinsman's reply to their question, when they examined the picture on their first visit. "Looks pretty solid, doesn't it? It was built a good many years ago, and the people about there thought at first it was to be a fort."

As the boys stood looking again at the picture,



For an hour they marched and countermarched. See page 1.

a clatter was heard on the stairs, followed by a timid knock at the door.

"Come in, Pat," called Mr. Kinsman.

The door slowly opened and the smiling features of auburn-haired Patrick McGuire appeared. His timidity seemed to vanish at once, and he entered the room briskly.

"I hope it's true," was Pat's first comment.

"What do you hope is true, Pat?"

This was an unnecessary question, but every one enjoyed Pat's comments and encouraged them.

"I hope it's true that the officers are planning to watch a lot of privates mixing mortar for a gymnasium. It's a grand scheme, Mr. Kinsman."

"If it isn't a castle in Spain," remarked Warren.

"A castle in Spain!" exclaimed Pat. "Who's talking about a castle in Spain? We want it right here in Portage. We don't want a castle, either, with moats and portcullises and dungeons. We want a gym like the one at the circus, with trapezes and things. You're talking rubbish, Tom, about Spain."

"And you're talking nonsense, as usual, Pat. We can't stop now to enlighten you about castles in Spain, for the others are coming."

The clatter of feet on the stairs was followed by the entrance of Jimmie Harding, Dick Brewer, Art Miles and the other officers. They sat in a

little circle and prepared to listen to Mr. Kinsman.

"I am afraid, boys," he began, "that to build a gymnasium with concrete blocks would be too expensive for you. It would require too much material and skilled labor. I have gone over the plan very carefully, and I have something else to propose. In the rear of the lot which I have just purchased for my mother is a large carriage-house. We shall not need it. I have consulted a carpenter, and he says that it would be possible to remodel it at no great cost. We should have to make it about twenty feet longer for basket-ball, but this can be done. Luckily it has sufficient depth and height. If the boys will help, I think we can equip this building before winter, so that it will serve our purpose."

The look of disappointment on all faces that followed the announcement of the impossibility of the first plan gave way to enthusiastic approval of the second. All started to talk at once. Mr. Kinsman stopped them with the words: "One at a time, boys. Tom, you first."

"That's a better plan than ours, Mr. Kinsman. We are very grateful for your permission to use the carriage-house. I propose that Mr. Kinsman and Jimmie Harding be made a committee to determine the cost of remodeling the building and to report to us, if possible, at the next meeting."

All agreed to this suggestion and an informal discussion followed. Before they left, Art Miles said:

"There is another matter, Mr. Kinsman. We promised the boys a long march and a picnic. Could we not do it soon?"

"By all means. Why not next Wednesday?"

"That's all right," came from half a dozen.

"Then get word to the company to meet at eight o'clock on Wednesday morning."

The boys took their leave, jubilant over the prospect of a gymnasium.

"We didn't carry out our plan exactly," said Joe to Tom, as they parted, "but we have started something just as good."

"Yes, and better," said the practical Tom. "One gym half built is worth two in your imagination, Joe. Good night."

CHAPTER II

PREVENTING A WRECK

ON Wednesday morning every boy appeared at the High School, prepared for the day's march. The company formed quickly and moved out of the yard and was soon on Laurel Avenue. Half an hour later they reached the open country.

It was a splendid summer day. The company was permitted to go out at route step, in easy marching order. Their objective point was a bluff overlooking the river about four miles from Portage.

About ten o'clock they reached their destination and prepared to enjoy themselves. The river was inviting, and it was not long before the whole company was splashing in the cool water.

At half-past eleven Joe Russell sounded "mess" on his bugle, and the company prepared for lunch. Several fires were lighted, and coffee was made in the tin buckets that had been brought for that purpose.

After lunch a game of baseball began. This did

not attract all the boys, however, and Jimmie Harding, Art Miles, Leo Inwood and Dick Brewer received permission to make a short exploring tour about the immediate country.

"Which way shall we go, Art?" questioned Inwood at once.

"Let's follow the railroad track around the bluff, and then strike off across the valley."

Down the hill scrambled the boys. The double tracks of the Atlantic and Western Railway swept in a great glistening curve around the foot of the bluff. The boys reached the point at the beginning of the curve. The four rails in one direction stretched in a straight line as far as eye could reach, while in the other they hugged the hillside. They were at once a challenge to the boys to try their skill in walking the rails.

"Come on," exclaimed Dick, "let's all walk on one track, in single file, and if a fellow steps off he must move to the next track."

All stepped upon the glistening rail.

"No pushing," said Inwood.

"Hurry along, Jimmie," urged Miles. "I can't walk as slow as this and keep my balance."

But the cautious Jimmie kept his own pace. With eyes fixed on the rail they swept around the curve. Dick Brewer was the first to step off, after a vain struggle to prevent it. He immediately stepped to the next track, and began again. It was

not long before the other three were on the second track. Dick was now leading.

After going several hundred feet, amidst laughing challenge and narrow escapes from falling, Dick chanced to lift his eyes from the track and glance ahead. What he saw so startled him that he stopped short.

"Hey, Dick, you're off. Get on the next track," shouted Jimmie.

Dick's only reply was to gasp "Look." He pointed ahead.

For a moment they were too amazed to speak. They hardly grasped what had happened. Across the track was a great mass of earth, rock and small trees. A second look revealed the meaning of it all. There had been a landslide, and a large section of the bluff had fallen directly across both tracks, completely obstructing them.

Jimmie was the first to speak.

"It's a landslide. It has carried trees and all on to the track."

"That means work for a section gang. Why aren't they here?"

"It must have just happened. It's on a curve, too. What if a train should come," exclaimed Dick.

"It would be wrecked as sure as fate. See here, fellows," said Harding, "what time does the 'Limited' leave Portage?"

“At 1.30.”

Jimmie looked at his watch. “It’s just 1.25 now. It will be along in ten minutes, if it is on time.”

For a moment the four boys stared at each other. They were startled by the thought that they might soon see the fast train dash into that obstruction.

“Art,” exclaimed Harding, “we’ve got to do something and do it quick. We must go back and stop that train if we can.”

“But something might come from the other direction, Jimmie.”

“I hadn’t thought of that.” He hesitated and then turned to Leo Inwood. “Leo, you and Dick go on as fast as you can and stop anything on the other side. Art and I will go this way. Run as hard as you can. Perhaps you can reach the station at Borton. Stop ’em, no matter what else you do. Come on, Art,” and Jimmie began to run back around the curve. Miles followed him, while Leo and Dick climbed over the obstruction and hurried on toward Borton.

“Dick,” said Leo, as they ran, “you stop, when we get around the curve, and stay there to flag a train, if it gets past me. Take off your shirt and wave it. I’ll go on as far as I can.”

They soon reached the end of the curve, where Dick halted and with breathless haste hunted for

a stick to make his signal. Leo ran on. Borton station, luckily, was only a quarter of a mile distant. Leo, with heart beating fast and muscles straining, pushed on. As he rushed to the door of the station, he heard a train whistle. The door was locked. The train evidently did not stop at Borton, for no one was about the station. Leo rushed to the window of the telegraph office. It was empty. Another whistle sounded upon the air, this time much nearer.

Leo acted at once. He saw within the office the red signal flag. He picked up an empty milk can that was on a baggage truck and sent it crashing through the window. He jumped in across the table and seized the flag. Another leap and he was again on the platform. One glance up the track showed the approaching train. Rushing directly across its path, Leo frantically waved the flag. As the train drew nearer, he jumped to the platform and kept waving the flag. He heard two short blasts of the whistle and he knew that his signal had been heeded. His heart gave a great bound, but he kept on waving.

The train drew up to the station and stopped. The engineer looked out of his cab and at the same moment the conductor stepped from the platform.

"What does this mean?" he demanded angrily. Leo was almost too exhausted to reply.

"There's — there's — a landslide between here and Portage," he gasped. "Stop the 'Limited.'"

By this time the engineer had come down from his cab and a few passengers had stepped from the cars.

"How do you know?"

"I've just seen it. It covers both tracks," answered Leo.

Without a word one of the passengers, a middle-aged man dressed in gray, stepped to the broken window and reaching in placed his finger on the key of the telegraph instrument. The sounder began a series of clicks which seemed louder than usual to the waiting group awed into silence.

The man at the instrument suddenly withdrew his hand and waited, listening. The reply came quickly, and as it came his tanned features began to blanch.

"It's too late. The 'Limited' has left Portage. Go on carefully" — this to the engineer — "and we'll hope to get out a flag."

The engineer ran to the cab, and the conductor and the man in gray followed him. As he went he seized Leo, saying: "Come along."

Leo was boosted into the cab and the train slowly moved on.

"Where is the landslide?"

"It's just around that curve. There's Dick."

Sure enough, there was Dick, frantically waving

his blue shirt. In spite of the seriousness of the situation every one smiled.

"Why didn't one of you try to flag the 'Limited?'"

"Two other boys have gone to do that."

The engineer ignored Dick's signal and went on. In a few moments they reached the obstruction, and the man in gray and the conductor jumped off and ran at full speed up the track, with Leo following.

In the meantime Jimmie and Art had sped along the track toward Portage.

"How are we to do it, Jimmie?" gasped Miles.

"Got any matches?" asked Jimmie.

"Yes, a whole box."

"All right, run as fast as you can."

They soon came to the end of the curve. One glance showed that the 'Limited' was not in sight.

"Here, Art, see this bush heap?" exclaimed Jimmie. "Throw it on the track."

"Which track?"

"I don't know: throw a pile on each."

Working desperately, they carried a mass of bush to each track and piled it up.

"Light them, Art, and keep them going. Oh, there she comes."

Far away up the track appeared a dark spot, with a trail of smoke.

Art pulled a note-book from his pocket and

tore off the leaves. These he lighted and applied to the brush pile. It caught slowly, as the wood was damp. He lighted match after match and held them to the twigs. The spot on the track was growing larger. The train was approaching rapidly. Would the fire never burn?

Toward the approaching train ran Jimmie, waving his hat in one hand and a piece of brush in the other. The train was now less than a mile away and coming like the wind. Jimmie heard one shrill blast of the whistle. The roar of the spinning wheels was sounding in his ears. He felt himself growing faint with his efforts, as he glanced back. Two small fires were burning briskly now, and he took courage.

Would he be seen? Would they stop? Frantically waving his hat, he leaped to the little ridge beside the track. The gigantic engine and the long line of Pullmans, now visible from his new view-point, showed no sign of slackening. Jimmie stumbled forward, still waving his hat and jumping into the air. The engine was only one hundred feet away. The boy's frantic motions seemed to him a wild dream when he heard the crash of the brakes and the peculiar shrill note of the clamped wheels sliding on the rail. With one despairing effort he threw his hat directly at the engine, and sank to the ground exhausted.

The long train came to a dead stop with the

nose of the cowcatcher directly in the burning brush heap.

Art, overcome by excitement, was likewise waving his hat when the engineer jumped down.

"What's the matter?"

"There's a landslide around the curve," gasped Miles. "Don't go on," he shouted in his excitement.

At this moment from around the curve dashed the conductor of the local, followed by the man in gray. Passengers, alarmed by the sudden stopping of the train, which had hurled many of them from their seats, were pouring from the "Limited." Miles was forgotten for a time in the excited conference between the trainmen. Orders were hastily given to the local to return to Borton and get men to clear the obstruction.

Then attention was turned to the boys. Jimmie had recovered and had come to the scene. Dick and Leo had appeared too, and they all stood together, awed into silence.

The man in gray was the first to approach them.

"Young men, I am Mr. Marquis, the general manager of this road. There is no use my telling you that you have prevented two wrecks. You know that. Every one here has cause to be profoundly grateful to you. I haven't time now to talk this matter over, but I want your names."

He pulled out a big note-book and took their

names. The passengers surrounded them and shook their hands.

"You will hear from me soon. We will buy you another shirt, young man," and he smiled at Dick. "I'll be in Portage next week. I have to go now and help get this track clear."

The stopping of the two trains had attracted the other boys from the hill, and the obstruction was soon surrounded by members of the company. Mr. Marquis met the wardens and made inquiries concerning the company. He made an appointment to meet Mr. Sumner in Portage.

In half an hour the track was clear. The boys were too excited to return to their games, and on Mr. Marquis' orders they were permitted to return to Portage on the local. As the two trains slowly passed each other, the passengers cheered and waved their handkerchiefs.

But the boys who had saved the trains were feeling the reaction of their fright and their work, and they sat silently together, guarded from intrusion by the wardens.

When the train pulled into Portage the company disbanded at the station and all went home with grateful hearts, rejoicing in the knowledge that as a result of their holiday a serious disaster had been prevented.

CHAPTER III

INSTALLING THE " WIRELESS "

ONE day in the following week, Mr. Marquis appeared in Portage and had a long consultation with Mr. Sumner.

"The railroad officials recognize the value of the service that the boys rendered and they wish to do something for them. What would you propose? "

"I hardly know what to say," Mr. Sumner replied. "I am sure the boys expect nothing."

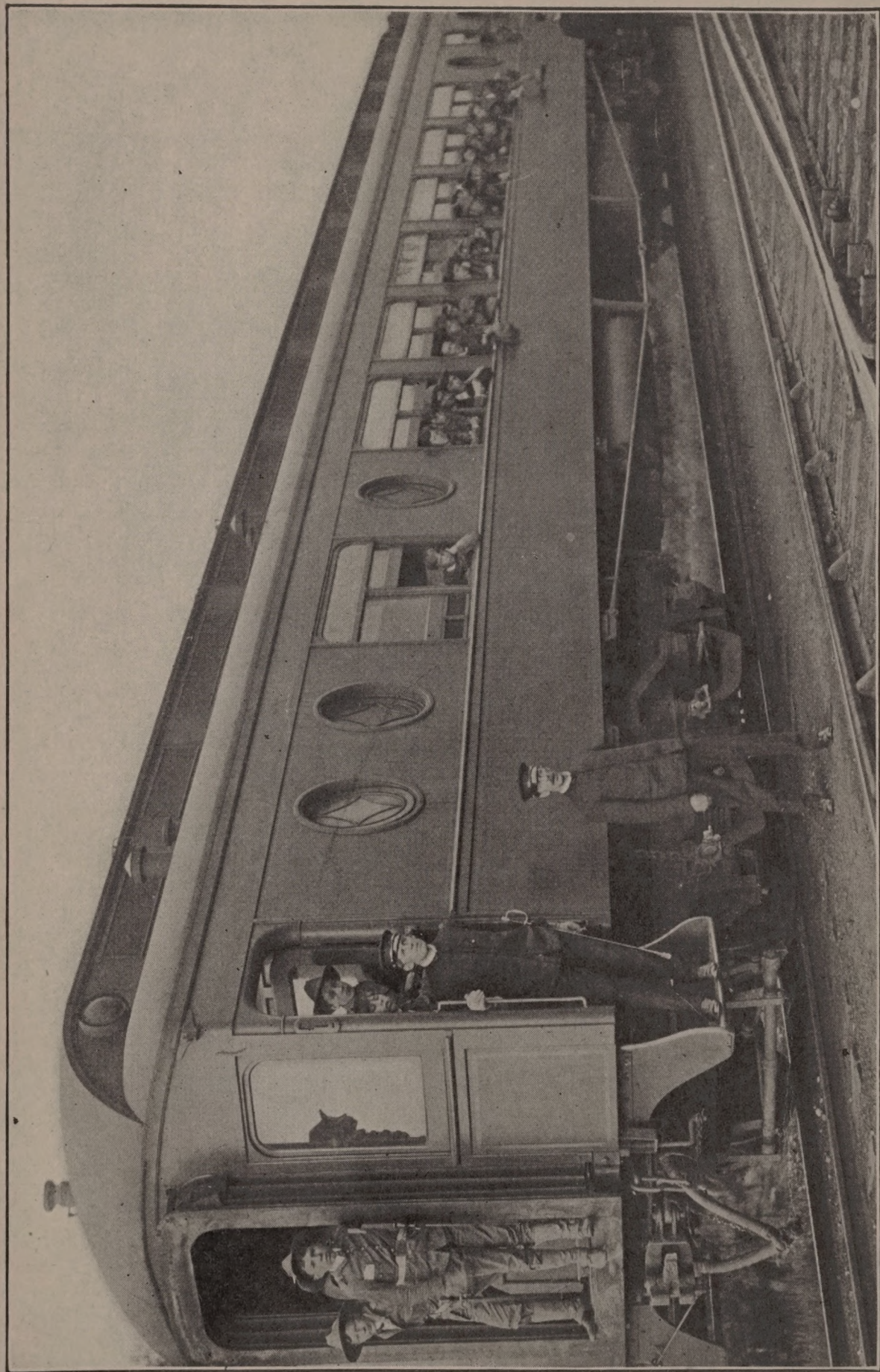
"We feel under special obligation to the four boys, but we realize how much we owe to the whole organization of which they are members. The outing of the company resulted in saving our trains. How many boys are there? "

"About forty-five or fifty."

"Are they under good discipline? "

Mr. Sumner briefly related their experiences in camp, and assured Mr. Marquis that the company was well drilled and under good control.

"Would you be willing to take them farther from home for a camp? "



It almost seemed as if a mighty railroad company had assumed the habit of a kindly fairy. See page 174.

"We might be willing, but we could hardly find a better spot than the farm where we were this summer. There are some disadvantages in being far away; and after we have made the journey, the remoteness of the place would not necessarily assure us a better camp."

"But suppose you should take the company to some spot of historic interest, so that the camp would have an educational value."

"Yes, that might be a good plan, but expensive."

"I have something to propose, Mr. Sumner. The railroad company would be willing to give these boys a fine trip, furnishing the necessary transportation and a special car to any point on its line."

"That is a very generous offer. I am certain that we should be glad to accept. If the company really desires to do this, you may count on us to help make such a journey a success. What spot would you propose, Mr. Marquis?"

"We could not find in our whole land a better place than the city of Washington."

Mr. Sumner was startled.

"Do you seriously propose that we take all these boys to Washington?"

"I do, and we shall do our part."

"That is certainly a fine suggestion and a generous offer. It would be a splendid experience for us all."

"Will you undertake it? — that's the point. And will it be a sufficient return to the boys?"

"It would, indeed, and I am inclined to think we could do it," and Mr. Sumner sat silent for a few moments, engrossed with the idea.

"When could you go?" Mr. Marquis asked.

"I was just thinking of that. We could hardly go this summer as the boys could not prepare for such a trip before school begins. I think that the very best time, even if somewhat remote, would be next June just after school closes. That would give opportunity during the winter to make a study of Washington so we might get all the benefits of the visit."

"You may choose any time you wish; we shall leave it to you."

"I think, too, that we ought not to tell the boys of this until somewhat nearer the time. It would seem a long wait and interest would lag. Suppose I talk it over with the other men and with some of the parents and then write to you."

"It is entirely in your hands. In the meantime we shall do nothing more about it. I desire, however, to see the four boys who actually saved the trains from being wrecked. I wish to thank them for the company."

"I believe I can find them for you."

Mr. Sumner closed his desk and with Mr. Marquis visited each boy in turn. After Mr. Marquis

had expressed in warmest terms the railroad's appreciation of their services, he placed in the hands of each one of the four a small package, asking that it be examined at leisure.

Upon opening his package each one found himself the possessor of a beautiful gold watch, the gift of the railroad company.

At the regular meeting of the Young Crusaders, Tom made a report in regard to the proposed gymnasium. A local firm of lumber merchants had agreed, upon Mr. Kinsman's request, to give the necessary lumber to enlarge the carriage-house. This news proved a stimulus to the boys, eager to have a place to play, and they readily agreed to make an assessment of three dollars each for the labor of the carpenter. The assessment was to be paid the first of September, and the work to be finished before bad weather.

Tom reported that Mr. Kinsman had left Portage for his vacation. He had gone to Cleveland and was to be married to Miss Anna Marshall the following week. The company requested Mr. Sumner to send a telegram of congratulations on the day of the wedding.

Mr. Sumner then suggested that meetings be postponed until school opened in the fall. Many would be away and the wardens wished to be free from the oversight of the company during the summer. This was agreed upon.

Mr. Sumner likewise said that the railroad officials were grateful to the four boys, and likewise to the company as a whole for its part in preventing the wreck, and hinted that the officials were desirous of aiding the Young Crusaders in their future progress.

When the meeting adjourned, Joe and Tom, as usual, went homeward together.

"I have a real idea now, Tom," said Joe; "not a castle in Spain like the concrete gym."

"Where is it, Joe?"

"It is boxed up at my house; it arrived this afternoon."

"Why, Joe, have you something on hand that you didn't tell me about?"

"Yes, I have, and it cost me my first dividend on my bank stock. I wanted to surprise you. Durr is in it too."

"Durr! why in the world is Durr in it?"

"You'll see; come over to-morrow morning."

"Can't you give me a little more information to-night?"

"Not a word more."

Tom had to be satisfied with this, and he speculated for some time about the sort of idea in which Durr, too, could be interested. Durr was a good chap, popular with the boys, but he lived four miles out in the country. Very little was seen of him in Portage during vacation.

Tom was unusually curious about the matter, so he ate a hasty breakfast and went over to Joe's. To his surprise Durr was on hand.

"Well, I declare, Emil! Are you here? Did you get up with the larks?"

"Better than that, Tom; I went around and woke up all the larks this morning, and then walked in."

"You and Joe have something important on hand."

"We have, but you are to be in it, Tom."

"Well, I hope so. After spending hours every week trying to hold Joe down to earth, I ought to have a share in whatever it is. What's in the boxes?"

Several stout boxes, not yet opened, were on the side porch.

"Wait for a few minutes and we will satisfy your curiosity."

Joe ran off, and when he returned he was pushing a wheelbarrow before him.

"Load 'em in, boys; now, steady. We're going to Uncle Russell's."

By turns they wheeled their load along the sidewalk until they reached Colonel Russell's house. The boxes were then carried up into the attic. As they deposited the large boxes on the floor, Colonel Russell appeared at the door.

"Moving in, are you, Joe?"

"Yes, sir," and Joe grinned.

"I hope the neighbors are all awake. I thought that you were bringing in a piano and had dropped it."

"We tried to be quiet, Uncle."

"Oh, yes! A boy's idea of quietness is not to make as much noise as he could if he tried. However, you can't expect a strategy board to work in absolute silence. When you get those cases unpacked, Joe, I should like to look at the contents. It is rather a satisfaction to know just exactly what kind of an infernal machine you have to sleep under."

"I'll call you, Uncle, if I may."

"Please do so," and Colonel Russell retraced his steps to his library.

The boys went to work with a will, and very soon Tom got a good view of shining apparatus within the boxes. He gave one long look and then turned to the others.

"You crazy conspirators; that's a wireless telegraph instrument."

"Right O, Tom."

Tom gasped. "What in the world are you going to do with it?"

"Why, that's easy. Emil is going to put up a station at his house, and I'm going to put one up here."

"Fine! Hurry up; let's get it all out."

They carefully unpacked the instruments and placed them upon the table. There were two complete transmitting sets and two complete receiving sets, and the necessary batteries.

"Do you know what all these things are, Joe?" asked Tom, as they looked over the array of strange devices.

"No, but here is a complete set of instructions and we can find out. Let's begin at the beginning.

"Let's take the transmitting set first. This box arrangement, with these brass screws for attaching wires, is the spark coil. In this the current is built up to a voltage sufficient to make a spark. The spark is made in this little affair," and Joe, still consulting his diagram, set a second instrument alongside the spark coil. It consisted of a heavy oak base with two upright standards, through each of which projected a rod. The rods were adjustable, so that the end of one could be brought close to the end of the other.

"This is the spark gap," continued Joe, "and when the spark jumps across these rods it sets up vibration in the antennae."

"Where are the antennae?" asked Durr, searching around.

"Oh, pshaw," continued Joe, his eyes still on the instructions. "The antennae are the wires that are stretched in the air. The whole structure is

called the 'aerial.' That's all to the transmitting set except this key, just like a telegraph key. Now, let's see what we have left. Here's a little device with a knob on an upright standard. That's the detector. That receives the vibrations. The knob is a thumb-screw and turns that small wire into a cup containing nitric acid. The receiver is just like a telephone receiver. You hear the clicks through that."

"What are your plans, Joe?" asked Tom.

"To call Uncle Russell first."

When Colonel Russell saw the array of instruments, he became interested at once. He gave the boys permission to erect one aerial upon the roof of the house, and the other on the carriage-house. They could then experiment easily until they became proficient.

The erection of the aerals was a long day's work. Jerry, Colonel Russell's coachman, was drafted into service. He produced the necessary lumber to build the frames. As the distance was short, the aerals were not very high. All morning they worked upon the frames. In the afternoon they strung the fine copper wire upon them, carefully insulating it. They then raised the frames into place and fastened them. During the evening they set up the instruments, making the proper connections.

Early Monday morning they resumed their

labors. Joe discovered two little devices which looked like small tubes filled with grains of carbon. This was fastened to a board, which had also an electric bell. Upon investigation, he found this to be a coherer, which produced a tap on the bell as a signal that vibrations were reaching the antennae.

Uncle Russell visited the attic on Monday morning, bringing with him a man who proved to be an electrician. He went over all the instruments and insulations, and examined the circuits in both the house and the barn.

"It's all right now," he said. "If the thing's any good at all, it ought to work."

Tom and Durr went to the barn, leaving Joe, the colonel, the electrician and Jerry in the attic. It was agreed that Emil should send the first message, which was to be three rings upon the bell. If all right, Joe was to wave a handkerchief from the attic window.

Anxiously those in the attic awaited the ring of the bell. Four pair of eyes were fixed upon the coherer, to note any possible change in the carbon grains.

Ting-a-ling.

Every one started and drew nearer to the instrument.

Ting-a-ling.

Joe waited to hear no more. Rushing to the

window, he waved his handkerchief and called out:

“She’s all right.”

It had been agreed to reverse the process if the first signal was a success. Joe rested his finger on the key, and then waited a moment, as if the destiny of a nation depended upon the descent of that key. Then with a sudden movement he pressed it down. There was a spark. Joe now rapidly pushed the key down twice. Jerry was standing at the window. All turned toward him.

“Tom’s waving,” cried Jerry. “It’s all right, but it beats me.”

By means of a switch contrived by the electrician, the coherer and bell were then cut from the circuit and the detector substituted. Joe put the receiver upon his ear. Tom had been instructed to send a series of clicks, at least twenty. Jerry waved his hand, indicating that all was ready.

“I hear them,” shouted Joe. “Four, five, six — ” Tom sent exactly twenty.

This process was reversed, and Tom again reported success.

The instruments worked splendidly. The boys then gathered in the barn and agreed upon a further set of signals. For an hour they tested the apparatus. Convinced at last that they were in actual possession of a working wireless, they determined to learn the code. But try as they would,

they were unable to distinguish the dots from the dashes. They consulted together in despair.

"I'll tell you," said Joe at length, "let's use the wigwag code. We can easily do that. For instance A is 112. Two sparks with a little interval and then two close together will do it."

This was found to work better. They were familiar with the code, having used it in camp. It was slow, but much more sure. Day after day they practised. Durr came in from the farm as often as he could. In the meantime they studied the instruments and learned how to make them yield the best results. Joe had wisely purchased a set of good instruments and not mere toys.

It was then agreed that Durr should construct an aerial at his house. It would have to be at least thirty feet high, that messages might be transmitted four miles. When the new aerial was ready then the set from the barn would be transferred to Durr's house.

This was not done at once, as Joe and Tom were soon involved in the other activities of their comrades in Portage. The boys had a long summer on their hands, and they began to find ways to occupy their time.

CHAPTER IV

THE "SEVEN" AND THE SECRET SERVICE

"Is Jimmie here, Mrs. Harding?"

Art Miles stood upon the porch of Jimmie Harding's home.

"Come right in, Arthur; Jimmie is somewhere about," and Mrs. Harding opened wide the door. Mrs. Harding always welcomed the boys and encouraged them to spend their evenings in the large living-room rather than on the street.

"What have you boys on your hands this morning?"

"We are going to have a meeting of some of the fellows to make some plans for the rest of the summer."

"Well, I hope you will manage to include mowing the lawn in the plans. I am sure your mother and I would welcome a conspiracy to do that." Mrs. Harding smiled as she spoke. "I'll call Jimmie."

In a few moments Jimmie came running in from the barn. Art, seated in a big chair, grinned at him.

"I've come over to help you cut the grass, Jimmie."

"Go on, Art, you're too late; I did that before you were up. Mother suggested it as a good way to spend the hour between daylight and breakfast, so I am free for a whole week." As he said this, Jimmie looked at his mother for approval.

"Yes, except for the dozen other things that you ought to do; but I'll remind you of them, Jimmie, so don't worry," said Mrs. Harding.

"Come out to the barn, Art. Some of the other fellows will soon be there."

Mr. Harding's barn was always a delight. It was clean and airy. There were no horses in it, and a single automobile was in the carriage-room. The loft was the local gathering place for the group that lived near.

Art and Jimmie ignored the stairs as a too easy means of access to the loft, and going to an empty stall, stepped into the opening of a chute through which hay had formerly been thrown into the manger. Mr. Harding had permitted them to cut away the manger that they might more easily accomplish this. The lower rounds of the ladder, made of rope and pieces of broomstick, were here visible. They quickly ascended and drew up the ladder after them.

The loft was large and clean. In one corner

was a canopy with side curtains, and within the curtains seven chairs and a small table upon which was a candle. The rest of the loft contained a trapeze, swinging rings, Indian clubs, a work bench and a few tools, baseball bats and other possessions of the boys.

Hardly had Art and Jimmie pulled up the ladder than they heard below the sound of rapid footsteps. Upon the side of the chute sounded six taps given in a series, first one, then two, then three. Jimmie responded by tapping six times in reverse order on an old door knocker which was fastened on the wall. From below came four raps, first a loud one and then a light one, both repeated. At this Jimmie let down the ladder, and there soon appeared above the floor the red head of Pat McGuire. He climbed out and hastily drew up the ladder as if pursued by some villain bent on murder.

"Hello, are ye telling each other of your bravery in flagging a train?"

Jimmie shied his cap at Pat, who caught it and hurled it back.

"No, Pat, we were waiting for you to come and tell us what you would have done."

"That's easy. I'd have shook my head at that train. No engineer could run past me when my hat is off," and Pat gave an imitation of his probable action.

More knocks were now heard and again the ladder was let down. This time Joe Russell and Tom Warren appeared, followed in a few minutes by Dick Brewer and Leo Inwood.

This group called themselves "The Seven." It was not originally by design that these particular boys had formed the Seven, but they found themselves meeting together often, and the idea of the secret club had suggested itself. It was their determination not to allow the existence of the organization to be known. They had adopted various means to escape observation. They did not have any further purpose than to enjoy rainy holidays in Jimmie's barn. Beyond that, their organization did not interfere with their activities in other groups of boys.

The secret appealed to them, and many customs had grown up among them. One in particular was the method of calling a meeting. Upon the blackboard in the assembly room at the High School, would be chalked merely the figure 7, with two letters after it. After school on that day they would gather at the barn. The letters were the signature of the boy calling the meeting.

"Each of us ought to have a special name," Pat had asserted at one meeting.

"We might be the seven wise men of Greece. Bion was one, but I can't think of the others. We are not the seven wonders of the world and never

will be. Suppose we stick to the seven days of the week."

It was so determined, and consequently when 7 W E appeared on the blackboard, it was known that "Wednesday," or Art Miles, desired to consult with the Seven.

Joe had some important business on hand, evidently, for he at once entered the space under the canopy and tapped seven times on a small bell. Solemnly the boys filed in and took their places.

"We have all the vacation on our hands," said Joe. "The Seven ought to do something useful this summer, instead of wasting its time."

"Why not make up our minds to do something that would startle this old town," proposed Leo Inwood.

"Joe has done it once and he could do it again," said Dick.

"I'll tell you fellows," said Pat. "No one knows about the Seven; we're a sort of secret service. There are a lot of things we can do if we want to. You know how these secret agents travel about hunting up cases for the government. Suppose we get hold of something to do and do it, no one being the wiser."

"What will it be?" came from several at once.

Tom Warren had not taken any part in the discussion. As usual he had listened and reserved his words to the last.

"If you really want to do something, I can suggest it," he said. "You know that Barth's father has a small shoe store on Water Street. I heard my father say that Mr. Barth was losing money because trade was bad. Barth is a good sort of a chap. He was in your tent at camp, Pat. Why couldn't we boom Mr. Barth's shoe business?"

"Do you get your shoes there, Tom?" asked Leo.

"No, I don't."

The question directed toward each revealed the fact that they all got their shoes from one or another of the larger stores.

"I have it," said Joe. "Let's go to all the Young Crusaders and suggest that we urge our parents to patronize Mr. Barth. Do it quietly. No one else will suffer and it will help his business."

Pat shook his head. "It's a trust, and we'll have that Sherman law putting us in jail. If that should be known, I'd be classed as a millionaire and that would ruin my reputation."

But Pat's warning was unheeded and the idea was taken up with enthusiasm. Each one of the Seven pledged himself to see six boys before night and urge them to patronize Mr. Barth. Their eagerness to begin their campaign broke up the meeting.

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"Mother," said Jimmie, when he went back into the house, "I need a pair of shoes."

"What, so soon again?"

"It looks like it, doesn't it? I wore these at camp and it was pretty hard on them."

"Well, I suppose you must have them. Can you get them yourself?"

Jimmie jumped at the chance. In five minutes he had called up Art on the telephone and found that he too had been suggesting the same thing. Jimmie went over immediately. Alice Miles, Art's sister, was in the yard. Jimmie greeted her cordially.

"Alice, I want to talk with you a minute, if I may."

"Not if you are going to walk on my flower bed in that way."

Jimmie leaped back. He had not noticed the bed. "I am sorry, Alice, but I have something very important to tell you."

In a few minutes he had obtained Alice's co-operation and a promise of secrecy. Art soon came from the house, and the two boys started toward Water Street.

Mr. Barth was sitting forlornly at a small desk in his little shop when Jimmie and Art entered. He seemed worried over an account book which lay open before him.

"Good morning, Mr. Barth."

"Good morning, boys," came the slow but kindly response.

"Where's Will?"

"He's at home helping his mother; she's not very well."

"Pretty busy this morning?"

"Not as busy as I should like to be. Trade is dull just now," and Mr. Barth closed his book and came forward. "The fact is, it worries me a good deal. I had to let my clerk go, and I try to care for my business alone."

"Could you sell us some shoes this morning, Mr. Barth?"

A little look of glad surprise came into his tired face.

"Of course, boys; sit down."

His stock was small but good, and it did not take long for him to suit the boys with a pair of stout shoes apiece.

He took the five-dollar bills which they gave him and looked at them with a smile.

"I haven't change in the till. I will have to go to the bank."

"We'll wait and keep store for you. What shall we do if any one comes in?"

"Just fit them out; there's the number on the boxes," said Mr. Barth, laughing. "But I'll be back in a minute."

"All right."

Scarcely had he left the store when in came Pat McGuire. He, too, with his natural enthusiasm, had gotten quick action at home.

Jimmie and Art laughed when they saw him.

"We're keeping store, Pat. What do you want?"

"I want to become a partner. I'll wait on the customers, and you keep the books and do the repairing. Here comes one now."

Sure enough, in walked Mr. Brewer and Dick. Dick looked very proud and gave Art a sly wink.

Pat stepped forward.

"How do you do, Mr. Brewer; and is this your little boy, Richard? I knew him as a small lad."

Mr. Brewer laughed as Dick gave Pat a thump on the chest.

"How strong and playful he is, Mr. Brewer. You want a pair of shoes? Sit down. Here, little fellow, play with this," and Pat handed Dick an empty shoe-box.

Pat rubbed his hands together, and again addressing Mr. Brewer, who was enjoying the fun, said:

"And would you like a pair for school or for the nursery? Here's a fine pair," and Pat reached out at random and took down a box which contained a beautiful pair of men's patent leather shoes.

"Hold on, Pat," said Mr. Brewer, "how much is that pair?"

Pat scratched his head. "I'm a little near-sighted in my old age and I can't see the mark distinctly, but if they fit we will make the price satisfactory. It is all one to us, Mr. Brewer, cash or a check."

"Try them on me, Pat," commanded Mr. Brewer.

Pat sat down, and carefully removing one of Mr. Brewer's shoes, drew on the shining patent leather. Mr. Brewer stamped his foot.

"It's a fit, Pat, sure as you're alive. Come now, what's the price?"

Pat sparred for time.

"That depends, Mr. Brewer. Do you want your name embroidered on the strap? That's a little more, but not much."

At this point Mr. Barth entered the store and looked with astonishment at the group.

"You said these were five dollars, did you not, Mr. Barth?"

"Yes." The answer came at once.

"I thought I was right, Mr. Brewer; five dollars. Shall I send them up?"

"Pat, you got out of a tight corner that time. Yes, you may send them up, and here is the money."

"And here is your share of it, Mr. Barth," and

Pat handed over the bill. "The little boy may keep the box."

"Why, we came to get him some shoes, but I think I'll deal with you, Mr. Barth. The proprietor here" — and Mr. Brewer pointed at Pat — "will sell me another pair if I don't look out."

Dick was soon fitted. They all left the store, Pat with Mr. Brewer's purchase, which he agreed to deliver.

Outside the four boys held a little jubilee. They had made a good start.

Within the store Mr. Barth, perplexed but much cheered, was thinking over the episode. Four pairs of shoes sold to unexpected customers was a good morning's work.

That afternoon he was again surprised. Mrs. Miles and Alice came to purchase. The next day it was the same. A few new faces appeared at his door. So polite and patient was the shoe dealer that all went away pleased.

It was not until Saturday that Joe went in.

"Good morning, Mr. Barth; how's business?"

"Fine, Joe." Mr. Barth knew Joe well. "I have had a very good week; in fact, it is the best week this year so far."

"That's fine. How's Mrs. Barth?"

"Very much better, Joe, thank you. She's going to the country on Wednesday for a little rest."

"That's good. I need a pair of shoes, Mr. Barth."

"Say, Joe, I have noticed a good many of your boys in here this week. How can you account for it?"

Joe looked a little queer as he replied.

"I guess the fellows heard how Pat sold Mr. Brewer the shoes, and they wanted to look at the place."

Mr. Barth laughed. He was not satisfied with Joe's answer, but he had to accept it.

When the Seven met on the following Monday, the report on the success of their Secret Service adventure was received with rejoicing. They felt certain that Mr. Barth would not lack customers. Alice Miles had done her share, too, and her girl friends had helped, but Jimmie kept his part of it to himself.

Joe urged the boys to diligence in reporting cases for the Secret Service. The boys felt that their success with Mr. Barth's business had opened to them a large field of operation.

When Joe and Tom next went to their attic retreat at Colonel Russell's, the colonel himself met them as they opened the door.

"Good morning, boys," was his greeting. "I am just going to town to lease one of my Main Street storerooms to Mr. Barth. He needs better quarters. The rent will be about the same." Tom

and Joe looked confused but said nothing. "Great city is Portage," added the colonel; "remarkable growth in retail boot and shoe trade. But I must not talk business to you, boys. Good-by," and the colonel chuckled as he left the house.

CHAPTER V

THE FLIGHT OF THE KITES

THE Seven met the following Monday morning, very much elated over their success in booming Mr. Barth's business. There were a number of suggestions as to the next field of operation, but no one project seemed of sufficient importance for them to spend very serious labor on it.

After a long discussion, the meeting adjourned until the afternoon. Jimmie Harding went home with Art Miles. Mr. Miles was entering his house when the boys appeared, and he called to them to come into his library.

"I have just been able to secure a new coin," he said, "for my collection."

"Father," said Art, "I don't believe that Jimmie has ever seen your collection of coins."

"Well, well," said Mr. Miles, "then he has missed one of my cherished treasures. Come in, Jimmie. I shall be glad to show it to you."

Mr. Miles opened a door of the small cupboard in his library, took a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked an inner drawer and drew it forth. In

it, wrapped in tissue paper, were numerous coins which he had been many years in collecting. He took great interest in showing them all to Jimmie and explaining their value to a collector.

They were interrupted in this occupation by a call to lunch, and Mrs. Miles insisted that Jimmie stay. He was very glad to do this, for it gave him a pleasant opportunity to have a little conversation with Alice.

Alice Miles was full of enthusiasm over a project she had undertaken during the morning. There had been recently started, in one of the parks in Portage, a vacation playground for the children, and Alice had spent the morning there telling stories.

"Why," she said, "when I told the story of Epaminondas, those little children fairly jumped from their seats with excitement. It's too bad, father, that this work has not more general support. Only one playground this year, and we should have four or five."

"What's the difficulty, Alice?" asked her father.

"The people do not take sufficient interest in the welfare of the children. Somebody should wake up this old town to the needs of the smaller boys and girls."

Jimmie's thoughts flew at once to the Secret Service. Here certainly was a field large enough

to interest even that organization. Mr. Miles was busy serving the plates and Mrs. Miles seemed concerned likewise about the lunch, so that neither offered any suggestions as to the way Portage might be aroused. Art, however, seeing his sister's earnestness, began to make suggestions.

"Why don't you take a hat, Alice, and stand on a street corner? You could collect a lot of money. If you should leave your hair just as it is, people would believe that you were one of the worthy children, and every passer-by would drop in the price of a side comb."

Alice, with a pouting look at Art, raised her hand to her head.

"Don't touch it," said Jimmie, "leave it just as it is." His tone was so serious that Alice laughed, but she was curious enough to say:

"Why don't you want it fixed?"

Jimmie, somewhat dismayed, replied: "It's all right, Alice. It looks a good deal better than Art's."

As the boys started for the barn after luncheon, Jimmie said to Art:

"Why can't the Service boom the work for the children?"

"That's a good suggestion, Jimmie, and it will please her very much," replied Art.

Jimmie looked up quickly. "I know it will please them all."

"Yes, that's what I said, Jimmie; it will do them a lot of good and it won't hurt you."

"Hurt me?" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Yes, it might improve your vocabulary. You could become assistant story-teller."

Jimmie ignored the thrust.

"Honestly, Art, I believe we could do it. Let's talk it over with the Seven."

The others at the meeting were evidently impressed with the idea. The question at once arose as to the way of arousing the city to the needs of the children. Merely an effort to collect money would not do, and the usual methods seemed to have failed.

"We might have a parade of children," said Pat, "with Tom in front carrying a baby, and Jimmie bringing up the rear with a go-cart to put the money in."

Joe, who had taken no part in the discussion up to this point, suddenly called out:

"If you fellows will leave it to me, I will agree to produce something within a week that will startle the community."

"What will it be, Joe?" asked several at once.

"I am not sure yet. I want to think about it a bit, but within a week I will be able to tell you more. I have to make a few experiments first."

"Joe," said Pat solemnly, "it's an awful feeling that comes over the rest of us when we know that

you are going to think right along for a week at a stretch. What if you should use up all your thoughts before you get to be middle-aged? You are an extravagant boy, Joe. Take my advice and be economical with your thinking."

"That's the only advice, Pat, you ever gave that you follow yourself," retorted Joe.

Pat laughed. "Let us help you think a bit, Joe," he said, but Joe was not to be prodded into revealing his plans.

The next morning found Joe and Tom on a large field at the edge of the town. They were flying the kite which Joe had rescued. Joe seemed to have forgotten utterly his desire to help the playgrounds and had become immensely interested in kites.

"She is all right, Tom; she pulls like a team of horses. With anything like a fair wind she will stay in the air for an hour. Let's finish the other."

They hastened to the attic, where a half-completed box-kite was upon the table. For an hour they worked over it and then again went to the field, where they put it up. It also proved satisfactory.

Upon their return Joe produced a large pad and laboriously began to write.

"I am no good at this, Tom. You will have to do it," he admitted.

"I will do it to-night, Joe, and have it ready in the morning."

"Be sure you do, Tom, for we must not delay."

Tom took the sheet of paper which Joe had written and carefully put it in his pocket. That night he spent several hours writing and re-writing until the result seemed satisfactory to him, and he went to bed.

Joe's interest in kites had aroused the activity of the other members of the Seven, and under his directions they built and flew several kites of large dimensions.

Joe took unusual interest in the flights, and made careful observations of the direction of the wind and the height to which the kites would rise. He also suggested other places from which they could fly them to advantage.

The long days of the vacation gave plenty of time for the boys to follow any fancy, and Joe's interest in the kites, most of which he constructed, made him for the time a natural leader of the group.

In the meantime the playground was not forgotten, and Joe was asked several times when he intended to startle the town. His only reply was that he was still thinking about the problem.

"Yes," said Pat, "that's an excuse, only an excuse, Joe. Here you are fiddling with kites, when you ought to be at home with a wet towel tied

around your head, sitting in a dark room thinking out your schemes. Remember the countless children who are suffering because you are not thinking hard enough."

"Never you mind, Pat," said Joe, "if I could think as easily as you can talk we would soon have playgrounds in every park in Portage."

Tom made several visits alone to a printer's in the business section of Portage. As he attempted to do this without observation, it was clear that he desired no companion on these errands. His purpose evidently concerned the papers which he had written.

Joe asked him quietly one morning when all would be ready, and Tom's reply was "To-morrow."

"Then it will be Saturday," was Joe's decision.

On Friday morning Joe and Tom made a trip to the edge of the town, and flew each kite in turn. As each made its ascent, they fastened small weights on the tail and also along the string to determine the effect upon the kites, but the wind was strong and all the weight was easily carried.

On Friday afternoon Joe had a short conference with his Uncle Russell. It seemed satisfactory, for he was jubilant as he joined the Seven at the barn.

"Uncle has just given me permission to put up

three kites from the roof of his block on Main Street. Suppose we try it to-morrow morning."

"Why don't you try it from the church steeple or from some tall chimney, Joe?" exclaimed Pat. "You can put up a kite anywhere, and here you go trying the most unlikely places. We've put up kites all over this town from Dan to the Queen of Sheba, as the saying is. Be content, Joe. Remember that the Secret Service is getting tired out, waiting for you to propose a new way for us to assist in the uprearing of children," and Pat made a mournful face.

Joe answered nothing. Jimmie Harding was likewise anxious to act.

"See here, Joe, if you don't work out your plans pretty soon, we are going ahead ourselves. If we're going to do something, let's do it. The people in charge are waiting for us to act."

This was not exactly the case, but it appeared so to Jimmie, who had heard again from Alice Miles about the work.

"I've asked for a week. It's not up until Monday noon, so you can't say anything until then. Now I want you fellows to help me to-morrow. We have seven good kites, one for each of us. I want them all put up at once to-morrow morning. Four of us can go to Uncle Russell's yard and three to the top of his building on Main Street. By careful handling the kites will form a long

line over Portage and that will be worth seeing."

The boys were enthusiastic over the plan and the details were quickly arranged. Tom was to be in charge of the four kites at the house and Joe the three on the roof. Joe called them his two flying squadrons.

Bright and early Saturday morning they gathered at the barn and gave the final touches to their kites. When the two squadrons were ready Joe said:

"I wish to give some final instructions."

Joe's instructions caused the boys to gasp with astonishment. Rapidly he unfolded his plans. To each boy were given five mysterious packages, and to each package was attached a fuse, each of different length.

Rapidly the two groups made their way to their respective stations and prepared to put up their kites. It had been agreed that when the town clock struck ten they should begin. Tom, at Colonel Russell's, and Joe, on the roof half a mile away, directed the work of attaching the packages. The boys were eagerly curious about them, but their curiosity was not satisfied. They seemed like large blocks of thin paper of various colors, but they were tied in such a fashion that the boys could not closely examine them.

Three packages were tied to the tail of each kite

and two to the string. Exactly as the clock struck ten Joe said to his two companions:

“There’s the signal. Quick! Do exactly as I say. Take Jimmie’s kite first. Here, Jimmie, stand right at the edge so you will have the whole roof for a run. The wind is fine. Get ready. Wait until I say ‘go.’”

But Joe did not say “go” at once. Quickly going from package to package on Harding’s kite, he lighted the long fuses.

“They are slow burners. They will last fifteen minutes. Go!”

At this word Jimmie started and the kite gracefully mounted towards heaven.

Joe did the same for Dick Brewer and then for his own kite. The fuses were lighted as before.

All three kites were now well in the air and mounting rapidly. Joe cast a glance behind him. Sure enough, two of Tom’s squadron had begun their ascent. Three minutes later the other two appeared. The seven kites were all flying at once. Then began a series of manœuvres which showed the result of Joe’s study of the kites on the previous days. By directions to Jimmie and Dick he managed to bring his squadron directly over the Square, while Tom’s squadron was now over the busy section of Main Street.

It was a beautiful sight. The seven huge kites of various shapes and colors hung in the air like

giant tropical birds. Against the blue sky they were clearly outlined. The people in the street below stopped and gazed at the spectacle. Word soon passed within doors and shops were emptied of their customers and office windows were filled.

Higher and higher mounted the kites. They could now be seen from every place in the city. Mothers went to their front gates and children hurried to points of vantage.

Suddenly one kite wobbled slightly as if it had lost some of its weight. A moment later the others did the same. The entire squadron was rocking as if at sea. Sharp-eyed people thought they could distinguish something falling from the kites. Were there birds in the air producing that effect? Something like a shadowy cloud appeared beneath each kite. These clouds grew larger and larger. Something was fluttering high in the air.

The people stood with open eyes watching the strange sight. In a few minutes it was seen that the air was filled with what appeared to be pieces of paper falling slowly earthward, fluttering, whirling, turning, first falling and then ascending in gusts, like a gigantic snowstorm. Wider and wider grew the area of its distribution as it came nearer. Now the papers were whirling about the tops of the high buildings. Men opened windows and made attempts to catch them as they fell. They were seen to be of several colors, red, white,

blue and yellow. Some fell on the roof where the boys were. Jimmie and Dick picked them up and looked at them eagerly.

The crowds in the streets were impatiently waiting for the leisurely scraps of paper. The wind was playing antics with them and it seemed as if they would never come. Men and women were now eagerly following the elusive bits of red and yellow. All over the Square people were moving to positions where they might catch them as they fell.

At last they came within reach and fluttered to the ground. There was a scramble for them. The yellow slips seemed to have the start of the others. Scores were picked up at the same minute, and the aroused people found themselves in possession of a piece of a very thin paper six inches long and two wide, on which were printed only these words:

THERE ARE MORE CHILDREN IN THIS
CITY THAN THERE ARE PIECES OF
PAPER IN THE AIR.
WHERE ARE THEY THIS MORNING?
SEE THE BLUE SLIP.

The red slip seemed second in the race. Upon it was printed a simple question:

ARE YOU HELPING OUR
12,000 CHILDREN?
SEE THE BLUE SLIP.

The white one came next:

YOU TAKE YOUR VACATION.
WHAT OF THE CHILDREN
WHO STAY AT HOME?
SEE THE BLUE SLIP.

There was a dash for the blue slip. It was the last to descend from the sky. It had a longer message on it:

OUR CHILDREN NEED FIVE
VACATION PLAYGROUNDS.
HELP TO KEEP THEM OFF
THE HOT, DUSTY, DANGEROUS
STREETS. HELP TO RE-
LIEVE TIRED MOTHERS.
BRING A GREAT JOY TO
THE CHILDREN.
WE NEED \$3,000 TO - DAY
TO FURNISH THE PLAYGROUNDS.
THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK
WILL TAKE YOUR MONEY ALL
DAY.

DO IT NOW.

BE AMERICANS AND GIVE
YOUR CHILDREN A CHANCE.

There was a gasp of astonishment. Suddenly some one called out:

"The kites! Look!"

The cry was carried along. Every eye turned toward the kites. A great shout resounded across the Square, for there in the sky, suspended from each kite, was an American flag.

The appeal went home. The crowds moved toward the bank to see what would happen. Within the front window stood Colonel Russell. He held two cards in his hand. One read:

PLAYGROUND FUND NOW AMOUNTS TO

and the other read:

\$100.00

In a few minutes the colonel changed the lower card, replacing it with one on which were these figures:

\$200.00

The growing crowd caught the idea. Rapidly the sum mounted. Within the bank every teller

was receiving money. When one thousand dollars was reached a great cheer arose. The placards faltered at sixteen hundred and came to a dead stop at seventeen hundred; that sum meant success, for the remainder was sure to come.

At noon the Seven drew in their squadrons and gathered at the barn. There was an excited conference. Agreeing to meet later in the day, the boys went to their homes.

Jimmie Harding that afternoon wore a carnation from Alice Miles' flower bed.

CHAPTER VI

THE TUNNEL

"JIMMIE," said Dick one morning, "you know that little Gilmour boy that lives in the house near your barn? I saw him this morning, and he looked half starved. What is the matter with him?"

"I don't know," replied Harding. "His mother is a widow. She rents the house from my father. She sews for people."

"I've noticed Andy Gilmour hanging around. He seems pretty lonesome."

"We ought to get the Secret Service after him."

"Just the thing. Let's go and investigate sometime."

The same day, late in the afternoon, they went to the house. There was a boy about twelve years old sitting on the step.

"Hello, Andy," said Jimmie. "Holding the house down?"

"Hello," responded Andy, smiling a little. "No, I am waiting for mother. She is late to-night."

"Come over to the barn, Andy," said Jimmie impulsively.

"Don't know whether I'd better," reluctantly admitted Andy.

"Oh, come on. Your mother won't care."

Andy followed the two older boys into the barn. They did not take him to the loft, but they climbed into the automobile and sat there.

Here Jimmie felt at an advantage, and soon, by skilful questions, he learned all about the Gilmours.

Andy Gilmour's father had died several years before. He had had a little money, but when he died it could not be found. It was soon made known that his brother had borrowed it, but he would not repay it. He had given no note and Mrs. Gilmour had been unable to force the brother to pay. She had some insurance papers, Andy told the boys, but he did not understand what. His mother might get her money later.

"Mother is awfully afraid of uncle," said the boy. "She thinks he may come back to Portage and try to get her papers. He tried to get them soon after father died, but she would not give them up. He went away, but he may come back, and mother dreads seeing him again."

At that moment a voice was heard calling: "Andy, Andy."

Jimmie and Dick went with Andy as he returned home.

"He's been over playing with us, Mrs. Gilmour," said Jimmie.

Mrs. Gilmour was a quiet, refined looking woman with a tired, pale face. She received the boy's explanation with no comment except to say: "I missed him, and it's nearly supper time."

Jimmie and Dick said good-by and hurried to the barn.

"It looks like a case for the Secret Service, Dick. I'll ask father about them."

That night at supper, Jimmie surprised his father by a few questions. Mr. Harding knew but little about his tenant, except that she seemed poor. He had rented the house to her very reasonably, and had made it comfortable.

"Father," asked Jimmie suddenly, as if changing the subject, "if one man borrows money from another, how can he give his life insurance to pay the debt?"

"Why, Jimmie, you are full of odd questions tonight. There are several ways. The usual way is for the man who borrows to assign to the other his life insurance policy, and to make him the beneficiary also."

"That means the one to whom the money is paid when the policy becomes due?"

"Yes."

"If a widow held a policy which had been given to her husband in return for a sum of money, could she get the money when the policy was fully paid up?"

"Yes, indeed! What next, Jimmie? I don't know how deep the Pacific Ocean is or who discovered potatoes."

But Jimmie was not to be discouraged and he smiled frankly at his father as he replied:

"You knew what I wanted to know, dad, and that's enough for me."

The Seven had a meeting and discussed the Gilmours. There was a frankness about their direct statements that is characteristic of boys, and it was soon agreed that they get better acquainted with little Andy.

It did not take them long to learn the facts. Mrs. Gilmour was very poor; she had hardly sufficient clothing and food. She worked very hard, and Andy was too small to help. Mr. Harding had made several attempts to give aid to Mrs. Gilmour, but aside from making such repairs on the home as would make it more comfortable he had been unable to do so. The Seven felt that here was a splendid opportunity for a display of skill, and it appealed to them as a challenge.

"Why," said Jimmie, "if we can't help some one right at our very door, what's the use of keeping up our Secret Service?"

"If she wasn't a widow," said Pat, "we could catch her husband in an alley, rob him and drop the money in her kitchen window. That would keep it in the family, but it would not get into circulation quite so suddenly. Now the first thing in that case is to get her a husband. An advertisement inserted in Tom's best style in the paper might do that."

"Shut up, Pat," said Tom. "You're talking wild. You haven't a sane idea this morning."

"No, you're right, Thomas, my boy. My mother combed my hair with a vacuum cleaner this very morning and it struck in."

"Jimmie," asked Joe, "can we get into Mrs. Gilmour's house for ten minutes?"

"I don't know. Perhaps father could take us in."

"Ask him if you and I could get in for ten minutes. I can find out what I want to know in that time."

Mr. Harding was persuaded to lend his aid to the boy's quest. Although he did not understand their purpose, he knew that their motives were good. On that very evening he went with Joe and Jimmie, and requested permission to inspect the foundation of the cellar, for that was what Joe wanted to see. It was a very dark place, with only a very small window on the alley.

"What's that?" asked Joe, pointing to what ap-

peared to be a panel of boards directly over the coal pile.

"That's an old window," replied Mr. Harding, holding a candle closer to it. "The cellar was originally exposed on that side, but some years ago I had the space between this house and the barn filled in with earth to make the house warmer. That was a window."

Joe noted carefully other things in the cellar. There was a barrel half filled with potatoes, and on a shelf were several cans of vegetables.

"The widow is thrifty," remarked Mr. Harding. "She seems to buy provisions in quantities."

That night the Seven met at Joe's request.

"Boys, I have it. If we can raise some money, I'll guarantee to help Mrs. Gilmour."

"Father will give some," said Jimmie.

"We've got \$7.65 in the treasury," said Dick. "That's enough to start on."

"What's your scheme, Joe?"

It took Joe but a few minutes to explain. It was so eagerly endorsed that the Seven agreed to meet at six o'clock the following morning to carry it out.

The barn was unusually lively at six the next morning. There was a small shed on the side of the barn toward Mrs. Gilmour's house. A high fence concealed it from the alley, and another

fence separated the small enclosure in which the shed stood from Mr. Harding's back yard. This fence had a gate in it. Joe entered the shed from the barn.

"This is the very place," said he.

"You are sure that your father will not object to our tearing up the floor of this shed?"

"He told me last night that we might go ahead, so long as we did no real damage, and did not disturb Mrs. Gilmour."

"Then here goes," said Joe.

He took a bar and began to pry loose the boards from the shed floor. The others helped as they could, for the space was not very large. Soon the bare earth was uncovered.

Then Jimmie paused.

"We must make some measurements. From the corner of this shed to that cellar window is eight feet. We ought to go three feet deep. Let's begin by digging a hole five feet deep right here in the shed."

"Where shall we put the earth?"

"Throw it through the window into the yard alongside the barn. No one can see it then. The fence will hide it."

The boys had provided themselves with spades and picks and they began to dig. The earth proved soft, but they soon realized that they had a long task.

"We must not make it any larger than necessary," said Tom.

"Two feet wide is enough, and five feet long."

Dick and Jimmie were in the hole and Tom and Leo were throwing the dirt from the window of the shed into the enclosure: Joe was taking measurements.

Pat and Art went off on an errand. They returned with a wheelbarrow on which rested an eighteen-inch sewer pipe two feet long. Pat had persuaded his father to let him use some defective pipe that Mr. McGuire had in his yard.

By taking turns at the work the hole steadily grew larger. As it grew deeper, they shored up the sides with the boards taken from the floor so that the earth would not cave in. By noon the hole was full five feet deep.

"It's dinner time, you moles," cried Pat. "Come out of the pit. You're a sight, Joe. As for me, I feel like one big blister. My hands won't be fit to play the piano or do other light housework for a week."

The tired toilers took their several ways to dinner. Many were the questions they evaded that day, and by mutual agreement they spent the afternoon at the river.

The next morning they resumed work on the hole. Joe had secured from Jerry, Uncle Russell's coachman, a long-handled spade. Very care-

fully he began to tunnel into the end of this hole toward Mrs. Gilmour's house. As soon as possible he inserted the sewer pipe in the tunnel thus begun.

"It can't cave now," asserted Joe.

Working with a spade through the pipe he enlarged the hole at the end of it, so that he could push the pipe farther in. This was accomplished with great difficulty, as the pipe was heavy.

At noon three lengths of pipe had been inserted, and six feet of tunnel was the result of the morning's work. Each boy in turn crawled into the tunnel and out again. The following morning they found the work harder than ever. They could with difficulty reach the earth at the end of the tunnel with their long-handled spade. It became necessary to invent some new method of digging. Tom suggested that one boy crawl in with a trowel, loosen as much dirt as possible, throw it into the pipe and then crawl out. They could scrape the dirt from the pipe with a hoe.

Progress now was slow, but by noon they had inserted another pipe, moving each one along. By Joe's measurements they were within two feet of the house.

As they were busily at work, Mr. Harding appeared at the door of the shed. He looked into the hole and then at the diggers.

"What in the world are you doing?" he asked.

Jimmie explained.

"It's a ridiculous project, boys. You won't know what to do with that hole after you have dug it."

"It seemed a good way to help Mrs. Gilmour, father, and it has been good exercise. We feel a little foolish about it ourselves, but we don't like to stop now that we have started."

"Don't do anything rash, at any rate."

"It's good fun, Mr. Harding," said Pat, leaning on his spade. "Each one is afraid to suggest that we stop, so we are keeping on. If you would like to dedicate this subway and take the first trip —"

But Mr. Harding said "Thank you, Pat," and retreated.

The following day saw the success of their efforts. Joe crawled out of the tunnel about noon and reported that he had struck the boards of the covered window of the cellar. They worked again that afternoon and by evening the tunnel was complete. From the shed to the cellar of the house ran a smooth subway. The next morning Joe brought a hammer, and after ten minutes spent in the tunnel he reported that he had loosened one board so that there was an opening into the cellar, a foot wide and thirty inches high.

"Now what?" asked Pat. "Let Monte Cristo come forth. Who's to do the high diving act into

that cellar, and what will he say when Mrs. Gilmour finds him face down on the coal pile? 'Excuse me, madam, I was by this way and I slipped in a minute.' No, you don't, boys. She's not going to call the police for my benefit."

"We don't have to go in, Pat."

"That's lucky. What's the program?"

"Dick, did you give the order?"

"Yes, and the coal will be up this afternoon."

True to his promise, a local dealer that same afternoon, delivered at Mr. Harding's barn a ton of coal in sacks.

It was an exciting moment for the Seven when they began to put their plan into operation. No group of conspirators planning to rob a bank were ever more filled with awe than the boys who looked at the sacks of coal lying in the little shed beside the entrance to their tunnel.

"We must make sure that Andy is not about," said the practical Jimmie.

Joe was sent out as scout. He reported on his return that the house was empty, Mrs. Gilmour being away at her work, and Andy nowhere to be seen.

"We must wet the coal," suggested Tom. "It will make a dust."

One sack was opened and the coal wet. The sack was then lowered to the edge of the tunnel and pushed in. Then arose a difficulty. It could

not be hurled headlong into the cellar, neither could it be emptied by a boy crawling behind it.

"I have it," said Tom. "Take half of it out and fold the mouth of the sack back. You can handle that, Jimmie."

Jimmie had been selected to take the first load. He pushed the half-emptied sack in front of him with great difficulty. When he came to the window he reached past the sack, removed the board, and inserting the mouth of the sack in the hole, carefully emptied the coal into the dark cellar. It fell with a dull clatter. Jimmie readjusted the board and crawled back.

His appearance gave rise to a great burst of laughter.

"When you've given yourself one good washing, Jimmie, you'll look like a negro. In about a week you'll be a mulatto," and Pat laughed again.

"Boys," said Tom seriously, "this is a good scheme, but it has its drawbacks. We must find some better way to carry coal."

"That's all we dare put in, for one day. She'll use no more than that for cooking. Winter will be our time. Let's get some stout paper bags."

"How about the potatoes?"

"The barrel is about six feet from the window. We'll have to toss them in."

"Not much," said Joe. "If we miss that barrel

it will make trouble. Has anybody an old piece of spouting?"

"There is a short piece in the barn," replied Jimmie.

"Bring it out."

Jimmie produced the spouting and again went into the tunnel. This time he carried with him fourteen potatoes, a contribution of two from each boy, as agreed upon. They had no difficulty in arranging at home for a daily allowance of two potatoes apiece. Jimmie pushed his spouting through the window and directed it toward the barrel. He projected the end of the spouting over the barrel and sent his potatoes wobbling down the tin runway. Thump! thump! he heard them fall.

"There," he said, as he crawled out. "That's a beginning."

It was not the end. Every day for two weeks the boys went through the ceremony of sending a little manna, as Pat called it, into the cellar. They determined to keep it up as long as they could get coal and potatoes and were not found out.

Little Andy was the principal custodian of the coal and potatoes in the Gilmour household. One evening he came from below with a pail of coal dragging down one arm, and a pan of potatoes in the other, with a candle stuck by its own grease in the middle of the pan.

"Andy, I'm afraid the coal is getting low," said

Mrs. Gilmour, "and I haven't saved anything this week."

"There seems to be a good deal left, mother," said the unobservant Andy.

"I guess I'd better go look."

Taking his candle, Mrs. Gilmour descended the stairs. She gave a long searching look at the pile.

"There seems to be as much as when I last saw it. That's lucky. We've been economical, Andy. And plenty of potatoes, too. We are good managers, Andy. I'll sleep better to-night."

CHAPTER VII

AN ESCAPE THROUGH THE TUNNEL

JUST at dusk one evening, late in August, Jimmie Harding slipped from the house, after eating a hasty supper, and hurried to Art Miles' home. Art was loitering about the yard when Jimmie appeared.

"Art, we must get a meeting of the Seven at once," and Jimmie seemed much excited.

"What's up?" asked Art.

"Can't tell you now. You telephone to Joe and Tom, and I'll get the others. We'll meet on our porch."

Within ten minutes the boys had arrived and were gathered on Jimmie's porch.

"Slip back to the barn but make no noise. We can't strike a light."

Quickly they sped across the lawn and into the barn. Jimmie quietly closed the door, and cautioning them again to make no noise, he climbed the ladder. All followed, mystified and anxious for information. When they were safely behind the curtain of their room, Jimmie lighted one

candle. The boys sat down and the light showed six serious faces peering toward him.

"Andy Gilmour told me this afternoon that his Uncle John was in town, and that his mother was badly frightened," began Jimmie.

This bit of news was perplexing to the hearers. Jimmie recognized this and continued:

"You know she fears that he will try to get the insurance policy she holds, and that means that she will never get the money her husband loaned Andy's Uncle John."

"Where is the policy?" asked Tom.

"I don't know, but it is probably in her house somewhere. Andy said that his uncle was a bad man, and he would just as soon rob the house as eat his dinner."

"Why doesn't she notify the police?"

"I don't know. She isn't the kind of a woman to ask help, I imagine."

"Well, what can we do?" was Tom's question.

"If that man is here, he will probably try to see her and force her to give up the papers. I suggest that we watch the house, and if he goes there we could get some one to help her."

This plan met with instant approval. It had in it all the hazards that appeal to boys. At once they began to feel that mysterious caution which they assumed must be the foremost quality of a good detective.

"Tom and I will stay here," whispered Jimmie. "Pat, you and Dick go to one end of the alley on Fourth street, and, Art, you and Leo watch at the other end of Third street. If any one goes into the alley, one of you follow him and the other come to us the front way. Joe, you stay in the yard across from the house. Tom and I will watch the approach from the rear and will be here in case of need."

"What will we do if he comes? We can't shoot him," exclaimed Joe.

"We'll wait until he comes."

But the certainty that John Gilmour would come was deeply impressed on the minds of the guards; they became as sure of it as of the sunrise. They stole from the barn again and went to their places. Tom and Jimmie unlocked the barn door leading into the alley, and after looking in each direction, stole along in front of Mrs. Gilmour's house. The curtains were drawn so that nothing could be seen through the windows. Joe slipped across the alley into the shadow of a shed opposite Mrs. Gilmour's.

The scene was all laid and waiting for the principal actor. Tom and Jimmie went back to the barn.

"I have it, Tom. Let's get on top of our shed and look through the little window."

The night was not very dark, as no clouds ob-

scured the stars. The boys found no difficulty in mounting to the shed roof from the dirt pile that had been heaped up near by while digging the tunnel. Noiselessly they approached the small window, and looking in they saw Mrs. Gilmour sitting near a table sewing, and Andy opposite reading. Mrs. Gilmour looked worried, and once when a board creaked under Tom's knee, he saw her glance anxiously toward the door.

The boys waited for a few minutes and then climbed down and went into the barn again. Here they discussed what to do if John Gilmour came.

"We can't decide now, Jimmie. We can hardly call the police if he merely knocks at the door. We'd better see what happens. We can look into the room through that little window."

The next half-hour seemed a lifetime. Once or twice they stepped out into the alley and made a visit to Joe, who was still at his post. Pat hurried in once, and that startled them, as they hoped for, yet feared, some news. But he came merely to learn if anything had happened and if there were further instructions.

It was now quarter before nine and the boys began to think that their plans were in vain. They were suffering from the reaction of waiting and the whole affair was beginning to seem absurd,

when Dick Brewer came bounding across the lawn at full speed and through the open door.

"They've come," he panted. "Two of them, from Fourth street. They are almost here."

For a moment the boys were panic-stricken. They stood stock-still. In the quietness they heard muffled talking and quick footsteps shuffling along the alley. Tom recovered from the momentary fear and tiptoed to the barn door. He opened it just a crack and watched. After a minute he turned and joined the two others.

"They've gone in. Dick, you go and get the boys on Third street. Pat's in the alley somewhere. Come right here and make no noise. Don't try to do anything, but wait for Jimmie and me. Come on, Jimmie."

Tom and Jimmie, trembling with excitement, made their way to the roof of the shed. Very carefully they went to the edge of the shed toward the little window and looked in. The scene that met their eyes made their hearts beat fast. They clutched each other's hands in the darkness.

Mrs. Gilmour was standing by the table and Andy was clinging to her. A burly man, with a slouch hat which he had not removed, was standing close to her and shaking his fist. He was talking low and fast. Another man was standing near by but between her and the door.

Mrs. Gilmour, pale but calm, was looking John Gilmour steadily in the face. She was evidently determined not to do what he asked. The voices rose higher and Tom and Jimmie could hear what was said.

"I'm going to have those papers to-night if I have to pull the whole house to pieces," and Gilmour shook his fist again.

Mrs. Gilmour made no reply.

"You'd better give them up for we'll find them. If you try to cry out, I'll tend to you," and he pulled a great strip of cloth from his pocket. "With this tied over your mouth you can't be heard," he added, with a sneer.

"I'll never give them up," gasped Mrs. Gilmour.

"We don't want to make trouble, but if you want it you may have it." He then turned to the other man.

"Tim, we've got to search this house, but first we've got to put this woman where she won't disturb us. You watch her for a minute. The doors are locked and I have the keys, but be careful. I want to look at something."

"Never fear," answered Tim. "She won't get away."

Gilmour went into the kitchen and was gone several minutes. Tom and Jimmie lay flat on the roof fearing he might go into the back yard.

With hearts beating fast they awaited his return, and soon they heard his voice.

"We shall trouble you to wait in the cellar a little while," he said sneeringly.

She offered no resistance, but turned to Andy, saying:

"Do just as they ask, Andy."

"Come on," exclaimed Gilmour. "The cellar's as tight as a drum. We'll put them there while we search."

Mrs. Gilmour and Andy were led to the cellar. Tim remained in the room, where Gilmour soon rejoined him.

"They are safe there. She couldn't be heard ten feet if she did call. Now find the papers. You look in this bookcase and I'll go up-stairs."

Tom waited to hear no more. Pulling Jimmie away from the window, he reached the ground, and with Jimmie following entered the barn. Here he found the five boys waiting in the darkness.

"Hush," said Tom, as whispered questions arose. "We've got to act quick. Jimmie, you go and get your father and telephone for the police. Joe, go up to the loft and get a candle. Quiet. Not a word."

Joe returned quickly. Tom took the candle and opened the door to the shed.

"Art, you come here and stay at the mouth of the tunnel."

Into the hole they jumped. Tom crept into the tunnel and slid along to the boards over the cellar window. He listened a moment and he could hear a quiet voice saying:

"Now don't worry, Andy. They won't hurt us. Never mind, Andy. Be quiet." Andy's sobs could be clearly heard.

Tom put his mouth to the crack of the boards.

"Mrs. Gilmour," he whispered.

"What was that?" came a startled exclamation.

"Mrs. Gilmour. Don't be afraid. It's Tom Warren. Be quiet."

"Where are you?"

"Right here. I am coming into the cellar. Don't be frightened."

Tom removed two boards.

"I am going to light a candle," he said. "Be very quiet."

He struck a match and lighted his candle. He saw Mrs. Gilmour standing near the cellar stairs. Her startled face was turned toward him. Tom quietly crawled out into the coal, being very careful not to disturb it. Slowly he made his way over the pile to the floor.

"Here, Andy, I'll lift you into that hole. Crawl through it. Art Miles is at the other end."

He lifted the boy into the entrance of the tunnel, and Andy scrambled out of sight in the darkness.

"Now you come, Mrs. Gilmour."

It was a harder task for her to reach the hole without disturbing the coal, but by using a box she finally managed it.

She did not speak but crept swiftly through the tunnel. Tom took his candle and with great care reached the window and followed her, re-adjusting the boards. Art had helped Mrs. Gilmour into the barn, where Tom joined them.

"Now you're safe, Mrs. Gilmour. We've sent for the police."

But the strain had been too great and Mrs. Gilmour was sobbing. They made her get into the automobile.

"Will they come here?" she asked.

"There are six of us here," Art assured her, "and if they come they will find us ready for them."

As he spoke the door opened and Jimmie and Mr. Harding appeared.

"The police are coming," said Jimmie, "but it will take them ten minutes."

Mr. Harding went to Mrs. Gilmour, saying: "I'll take you to my house. It will be better. The boys will watch things here."

Mrs. Gilmour, taking Andy with her, went with Mr. Harding, who put her in Mrs. Harding's care. Upon his return he said:

"Now, boys, we must not let those men escape. But we can't capture them. If they leave, we shall

follow them. They can't get far without being taken."

"I think I'll look in the window again," said Jimmie.

Tom went with him. They found that the rescue had not been discovered, as the men were still searching. The house was in confusion. Drawers had been opened and emptied. They heard Gilmour say:

"She may have given that paper to some one to keep for her."

"More likely she has it with her," suggested Tim.

"I never thought of that. I'll scare her into giving it to me."

He took a lamp and started for the kitchen.

The boys heard his heavy footsteps on the board floor. Tim waited in the room. Jimmie was about to climb down and tell the others that the men would surely leave when they made the discovery that Mrs. Gilmour had gone.

"Wait till he comes back," said Tom, holding Jimmie.

When Gilmour returned he looked perplexed and frightened.

"They're not there," he stammered.

"You're joking," asserted Tim.

"No, I'm not. I looked carefully. They're not there."

The men stood staring at each other, uncertain what to do.

"You look, Tim; she simply couldn't get away. I suppose I'm nervous."

Tim hesitated. He took the lamp and glanced toward the kitchen.

Jimmie whispered in Tom's ear.

"We've simply got to hold them until the police come. They'll escape when they find out she's gone. I'm going to do it."

Jimmie slid to the edge of the roof and hanging over it put his feet into the window of the shed, then let go and landed on the dirt floor of the shed. He jumped into the hole and darted into the tunnel. He put his mouth to the crack, and as the first ray of Tim's lamp was seen from above, he said:

"Oh! Mother, they won't discover the trap-door to the attic, will they?" And then, in a loud whisper, "Hush, Andy."

The light disappeared. Tom, on the shed, saw Tim re-enter the room.

"They're down there, all right. I heard them talking. The boy said something about a trap-door into the attic. We must find that. That's where the paper is. It's as good as found. Come on."

"You stay here and watch them, and I'll go."

Jimmie withdrew from the tunnel and joined Tom.

"Did it work, Tom?" he whispered eagerly.

"I guess it did, whatever it was. They are hunting for an attic. Let's join the rest."

The boys were still in the barn, but Mr. Harding had gone to the front yard to await the police. Joe went out to see if they were near and returned on the run with the report that they were coming around the house. They were soon in the barn, five of them, for Mr. Harding had sent an urgent call.

Two were quickly stationed at the back door of the house. Three went to the front door. The boys and Mr. Harding gathered in the alley to see the capture.

A policeman stepped up to the door and knocked. Without waiting for a reply he put his shoulder to the door. The lock broke and the door opened. With a leveled revolver he stepped into the room, followed by the other two officers. The boys on the outside drew near.

Tim, taken by surprise, made no effort to escape. Crying out loudly "John, John," he submitted to the handcuffs. Gilmour, aroused by his cry, came stumbling down the stairs only to walk into the trap.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"You," was the short reply.

The boys now crowded into the room, keeping at a safe distance. Gilmour seemed surprised at their presence, and glanced uneasily at Tim.

"What are you taking us for?" he blurted out.

"For several reasons," said one policeman. "Come along now."

"Wait a minute," he pleaded. "I guess it would be better if I told you that Mrs. Gilmour is locked in the cellar."

"Oh! no, she isn't," said Mr. Harding. "She has been out of there ten minutes."

The police waited for no more talk but left the house, while the prisoners muttered vain explanations.

Seven tired, excited boys went to their homes that night. Mrs. Gilmour and Andy stayed with the Hardings, and the next day they returned to their forlorn house, and set it in order.

Within a month the two men were safe in the penitentiary, and within six months an insurance policy, now fully paid, yielded to Mrs. Gilmour a sum of money sufficient to relieve her of care and anxiety.



Under the shade of a large tree the boys had a half-hour rest. See page 191.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMOUS DEBATE

THE last few weeks of vacation were swiftly passing. The days were growing shorter and the long twilights of June had given way to the earlier darkness of the latter part of August. The Young Crusaders had postponed their meetings until school began. Mr. Kinsman was married and would soon bring his bride to Portage. Tom and Joe spent many days in Uncle Russell's attic, perfecting themselves in the art of wireless telegraphy.

The restless enterprise of the Seven took many forms. Now it was a day with Durr in the country, and then a long tramp up the river. Their success in helping Mrs. Gilmour had for a time satisfied the Secret Service.

Early one September morning Jimmie Harding was walking through the Square with his father. The usual activities of the place did not seem to interest him. That something was occupying his thoughts was only too apparent, for he suddenly turned to his father, saying:

“Dad, this town ought to have a public drink-

ing fountain on the Square. Look at these horses from the country. Where do they water them? ”

“ At the livery stables, I guess, son. There’s no public trough within half a mile of this place.”

“ There ought to be,” asserted Jimmie. “ I’m thirsty now. You can’t take me to a livery stable, Dad, but here’s a soda fountain.”

Mr. Harding stopped and looked at Jimmie.

“ James, did you introduce all that talk about horses just to wheedle me into treating you? ”

“ Honest, no! But one thing leads to another, doesn’t it? ”

“ Yes, but it’s a long cry from a public horse trough to a soda fountain. However, inasmuch as when they do establish a fountain I shall not be obliged to treat you any more, and — ”

“ Hold on, Dad,” said Jimmie, as they entered the door. “ That’s not logical. Now if I had suggested a public soda fountain that would have been different. Cold water is the best thing there is — ”

“ Oh, is it? ” interrupted Mr. Harding. He turned to the clerk. “ Bring the young man a glass of cold water and give me a chocolate soda.”

“ I beg your pardon, father, but I did not quite finish my sentence. I meant to say that cold water is the best thing there is for horses. Hello, here’s Pat.”

The familiar figure of Pat McGuire in the door was the cause of Jimmie’s exclamation.

"This is a conspiracy," asserted Mr. Harding.
"Pat, come in."

"Good morning, Mr. Harding," said Pat shyly.
"I hope I'm not intruding."

"Jimmie is having a drink of water and here's a chocolate soda. I ordered it only to be sociable. If you will do me the favor of drinking it for me, I'll be glad."

"Thank you kindly," — but Pat, instead of taking it at once, walked behind the counter.

"What are you doing, Pat?" asked Jimmie, astonished at Pat's action.

"I'm employed here for a week while the regular boy is on a vacation. I started yesterday noon and I've invented six new mixtures already. Now if you'll try one, Mr. Harding," and Pat reached for a glass.

Mr. Harding laughed. "Try it on Jimmie."

Pat took a stick of black licorice and with a grater scraped a small portion into a glass. He took a pair of tongs, and reaching under the counter drew out a large, round, brown ball, which he put into the glass. He then placed it under one of the faucets and allowed some rich syrup to flow in. Treating this in the usual manner, he handed it to Jimmie, who tasted it.

"That's fine, Pat. What is it?"

"Licorice soda," replied Pat, who was now engaged with the chocolate.

"What's the round thing?"

"Whist! I'll tell ye. It's a marble," and Pat lowered his voice.

"What for?"

"To arouse curiosity. Everybody along the street is bringing a friend here to treat him and see him try to break up that marble with his spoon. It's doubled our trade, and I've had my wages raised twice since yesterday noon. I started in working for all the soda I could drink. Last night I was told I could treat a friend once a day. This morning I learn I'm to have the privilege of reading the magazines when trade is dull."

"Go on, Pat. I'll test you soon. I am coming back later in the day to be your next friend."

Mr. Harding and Jimmie left the store, much amused over Pat's new job.

"Here comes the mayor, Dad. Ask him about the public fountain."

The mayor of Portage, Amos Sparks, was serving his third term. He was a pompous little man, very efficient but with very set opinions. He had a vast sense of his own importance and resented any interference with his actions and any opposition to his opinions.

"Good morning, Mayor," said Mr. Harding cordially. "Don't you think we ought to have a public fountain on the Square so that small boys will not have to resort to soda fountains?"

The mayor smiled, but he did not know how to treat any subject in a light, pleasant way. Mr. Harding continued:

"Seriously, Mayor Sparks, would it not be a good thing to have a fountain with cold water and a trough for horses?"

"Not at all, sir, not at all, sir. This municipality cannot undertake to supply every household need of her citizens. The question was broached once at a council meeting but I opposed it, sir, and always shall. I may say, too, that Josiah Lesser and other citizens quite agree with me."

Mr. Harding was somewhat embarrassed by the mayor's vehement words and Jimmie was angry. Mr. Harding did not continue the subject but said "Good morning," and went on.

"My goodness, Dad, he's awfully important, isn't he? What has Mr. Lesser to do with it?"

"Mr. Lesser is a power behind the throne. He is rich and somewhat of a dictator in this city. He was defeated for Congress and it provoked him. He gives the impression of desiring to block public interests when he can."

Jimmie was silent. He did not return to see Pat as he had first intended, but he hunted up Tom and Art Miles and asked them to come to the barn. He told them his father's conversation with Mayor Sparks.

"Here's a real problem for the Secret Service," declared Tom. "Let's consult Mr. Sumner."

Mr. Sumner was in his office and he welcomed the boys.

"There's something afoot, I can see that," he remarked as they sat down.

Jimmie at once began to explain. Mr. Sumner was amused at first and then interested. But he finally announced:

"You can't do it, boys. The powers are too strong for you. You couldn't persuade the council. It's too big a job for you."

"But, Mr. Sumner, if we want to try will you help us?"

"Surely, but don't depend on me for the work. I'll try to keep you in the straight track. What's your first step?"

"We can never do it by the usual means," announced Jimmie, "but perhaps we can find a way. We haven't consulted Joe yet," and he laughed as he spoke.

Every one knew that Joe was full of resources, and although Jimmie said this lightly he felt that Joe's aid would be invaluable. It was determined at once to call a meeting of the Seven. That night the conference was long and serious. One plan after another was discussed and rejected. Mayor Sparks and Josiah Lesser could secure a drinking

fountain if they wanted to do so. The question was to compel them to want to do so.

"We ought to try to get the newspapers to take it up," suggested Art Miles.

"No use," replied Tom; "they are too busy to pay any attention to the desire of a few boys."

Joe had left the group and was looking out of the barn window into the alley. It was not such an alley as would inspire great ideas, but Joe seemed to find it satisfactory. His serious face and the look of preoccupation that showed itself in his black eyes indicated unusual concentration of thought. The discussion went on for several minutes before Joe rejoined the group.

"Well, Joe, out with it; what's the plan?"

"Would you offer five dollars reward, Joseph, to the first person giving a fountain to the city?" and Pat looked seriously at Joe. Joe's reply came deliberately.

"Why not get Mr. Lesser to give it?"

Pat thumped his fist on the small table so that the candle flickered under the impact of the blow.

"The very idea, Joe; why didn't we think of it? Joe, you're a marvel. We can all put on our Sunday clothes, each take a basket and go to Mr. Lesser and say: 'Please give Portage a fountain and put the money right in the baskets and we'll do the rest.' Then he would fill each basket with silver

dollars and we could march home and have our fountain before nine the next morning. Joe, if you live long enough, you'll be Secretary of the Department of Public Works of a Sunday-school class."

Joe was sitting with a broad grin on his face at Pat's good-natured bantering. He was used to it.

"We must reach him through his weakness," he said quietly.

"That's his boy," spoke up Jimmie.

"Right you are, Jimmie."

It was true. Josiah Lesser had a boy, Adam, who was the pride of his life. Mr. Lesser was a kindly man at heart but he had a feeling that his talents were not sufficiently recognized in his own community. His boy, who was to enter High School in the fall, was popular among the boys of his age, a manly fellow of whom his father might well be proud.

"We must first create a little public sentiment in favor of the fountain," continued Joe; "if we can make it a live issue, and get it talked about, it would help."

"That's not the heart of your plan," asserted Tom.

"No," replied Joe, "but it is the first step."

"Why not try the kites?" asked Dick.

"That wouldn't work again; we should kill the project. Suppose each one talked to his father

and asked him to talk to some other men. I'll work out the rest of the plan later."

So it was agreed, and the next morning at breakfast seven boys opened the subject, with indifferent success. The question did not seem to arouse much enthusiasm but they persisted. Mr. Sumner came to their rescue by suggesting the matter at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. That brought a notice in the papers.

Pat gave the cause an impulse by a well-directed question. There was an old tree on the Square which the city protected as it did its treasury. Under that tree an Indian chief and his braves met the early settlers of Portage in a council, in which certain lands and rights had been assured to the settlers, on payment of a sum of money and many gifts. The tree was the pride of the city. It was protected by a fence and diligently cared for. Pat's question was directed to Mr. Kinsman one day in school in a history class.

"Would you think it right, Mr. Kinsman, for the city council to cut down the Portage elm to put a new public fountain there?"

It was enough. No one paid much attention to Mr. Kinsman's answer, but fifty patriotic boys and girls asked for information that night at supper as to the intention of the council. Inquiry among the parents revealed the fact that the council had no such intention, but the point was being

raised by so many that a printed denial was put into the newspapers. This made many other people acquainted with the public fountain idea.

Joe, with Tom's aid, had set other machinery in motion. He proposed the name of Adam Lesser for the Young Crusaders and Adam was elected. Joe then learned, after some difficulty, of the firms that constructed such public works as fountains, and he secured a few catalogues and photographs of these conveniences in other cities. Adam Lesser was skilled in drawing, and Joe persuaded him to take the catalogues and photographs home and make tracings of the best ones for Joe's use. Joe did not indicate what possible use he had for such things, but, being a junior, he lived in a realm of unusual responsibility and knowledge, and Adam, the freshman, awed by Joe's superior age and attainments, readily agreed to make the tracings. Thus they were introduced into the Lesser home and no doubt to the eye of the father, ever interested in his son's activities.

Joe was now ready for his final plans. The school term was a month old and the Young Crusaders were having regular meetings. The Seven also met once a week to measure the strength of the movement for the public fountain. They had at least succeeded in arousing public attention, largely through Pat's well-directed question.

Joe had taken Mr. Sumner into his confidence

and together they had worked for several nights. They were now ready for the first step. Upon motion of Jimmie Harding, the Young Crusaders resolved to have a public meeting. Permission was secured to use the High School auditorium. There would be an oration, one or two recitations, an exhibition of skill in the manual of arms, and a debate. There was no difficulty whatever in arranging that five of the debaters should be selected from members of the Seven and that the sixth should be Adam Lesser.

It was a cool night in October when the public meeting took place. The High School was brilliant with lights. A general invitation had been given and the response exceeded all expectation. Fathers and mothers came to see their boys. A procession of interested people passed through the big doors and were escorted to seats by boys in uniform. Near the platform, in the front row, sat Mayor Sparks, very solemn and dignified, and with him two other gentlemen. One was the member of Congress from the district and the other was an attorney. They had been asked to be present as judges of the debate.

The oration delivered by Ewing and the recitations by Barth and Hamilton were well received by the large audience. The exhibition of skill in the manual of arms was a surprise to those who did not realize how proficient the boys had be-

come. But it was evident that the debate was to be the great affair. The platform was carefully rearranged for this event. In the center sat Tom Warren, as presiding officer; on the left were Joe Russell, Adam Lesser and Pat; on the right Brewer, Harding and Miles.

The chairman arose and announced the subject.

“Resolved, that Portage should have a public fountain on the Square.”

The chairman could not proceed because of great clapping of hands, which indicated some general interest in the question. When he could be heard Tom further announced:

“For the affirmative, Russell, Lesser and McGuire; for the negative, Brewer, Harding and Miles.”

The members of the Seven began to feel somewhat frightened over their bold project. Would they really be able to carry it off? But it was too late now to repent.

Joe Russell began with a short speech. The general trend of the debate had been decided upon at a long conference, in which Mr. Sumner had given his assistance. Joe's speech was a simple statement of the usefulness of such a fountain.

Brewer replied with an equally calm statement of the reasons for opposing such an enterprise. He urged economy, the congestion of traffic, and the difficulty of caring for such a fountain.

The debate seemed to lack spirit when Adam Lesser arose. He was somewhat younger than the others, but his voice was clear and he could be heard all over the hall. His father, who sat in a conspicuous place near the front, was evidently pleased at the part his boy was to take. With simple diction and straightforward argument he made a plea for public utilities. The attention of the entire audience was riveted upon the slight boy, who warmed up to his work. Josiah Lesser sat forward in his seat and his eyes never left his son. With a ringing plea to consider the public interests, Adam closed and sat down. The applause was enthusiastic.

Then came Jimmie. With equal skill he recited his speech, but he spoke one sentence with great emphasis.

"This municipality cannot undertake to supply every household need of her citizens; I repeat it, gentlemen of the opposition and honorable judges, and it is not my thought alone, but the wise saying of one versed in the affairs of civic government, *this municipality cannot undertake to supply every household need of her citizens.*"

Here the mayor of Portage glanced at the member of Congress. This phrase had been a favorite one with the latter, and had been taken up by the mayor. Each felt conscious that he was being quoted.

When Pat arose to reply, a real interest had been aroused. "Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the opposition, honorable judges, ladies and gentlemen," and Pat bowed to each in turn.

"I'm at the disadvantage of not knowing whether you entirely understood the arguments of my opponent. If you didn't, then I only fear you may give them more weight than they deserve. But if you did, then you can see at once how flimsy they are. I'll take it for granted that you understood them and not waste my time in reply. But there was one sentence which caught my fancy. It had a ring to it. It was like the words of some great man when called upon suddenly to speak, with nothing to say."

Here the mayor glanced uneasily at his neighbor.

"The words have a power of wind in them. Listen while I quote: 'This municipality cannot undertake to supply every household need of her citizens' — soap, and such like, I take it.

"Ladies and gentlemen, that's a fine sentence. If my honorable opponent will preserve it till he grows up and then use it in a public career, it will be the most useful sentence by which he can ever evade his plain duty."

Here Pat looked very virtuous, and both the member of Congress and the mayor looked very uncomfortable.

“But, hold; it isn’t his own. That’s a blessing. If he had thought that up out of his own head, I’d have felt reluctant to trust him with my confidence. But he evidently borrowed it; stole it from some one. Who it was, I have no idea,” and Pat shook his head. “But it must have been from some feudal baron, locking the granary and putting the key into his pocket.” (Two of the judges were getting red in the face and Josiah Lesser was laughing quietly. Was not this Adam’s comrade in debate?) “It might have been one of those heathen kings down in Egypt who awoke one morning feeling bad, and said to the hired girl at breakfast: ‘Tell the stable man not to give out any more straw from the barn to make bricks with.’ It’s no argument and you can’t apply it to the debate and I’m surprised that my opponent would quote it.”

(“One minute more,” interrupted the chairman.)

“What,” resumed Pat, “and I haven’t fairly begun. It was a trick, Mr. Chairman, to get me to discuss the nonsense of some Egyptian mummy,” — and Pat appeared angry, — “when I ought to have settled the debate. But Mr. Russell and Mr. Lesser have done that, so thanking you for not being misled by my opponent’s nonsense, I’ll sit down.”

The applause was deafening. Two men did not

applaud; they were the judges. They looked distressed and uncomfortable. Mr. Lesser, however, was enjoying the evening.

Art Miles closed with a brief argument. It was then announced that the judges would retire and at their convenience return their decision. When they were gone, the chairman said that he would ask the audience to declare itself. All in favor of the affirmative would stand up. A few promptly arose and then almost the entire assembly followed. Among them was Josiah Lesser. It was so nearly unanimous that Warren at once announced that the audience had decided in favor of the proposition that Portage should have a public fountain on the Square.

Every member of the Seven awaited with anxiety the return of the judges. Finally they came. The mayor was asked to read the decision, which was as follows:

“The judges, having taken account of the fact that one of the speeches for the affirmative was not an argument,” and here the mayor paused to let the full force of his censure fall upon Pat, “and recognizing that such a theoretical question must be judged according to the weight that the arguments have upon mature minds, have accorded the decision to the negative!”

There was a dead silence. The meeting came to an end rapidly. Josiah Lesser took his son

Adam by the arm and stalked from the building.

"Theoretical is it, theoretical is it?" he muttered, as he strode along. "We'll see about that."

When he reached the house he said with emphasis: "Adam, where are those pictures you were copying to-day? I want to look at them."

They were quickly produced and a stern man sat a long time that night in contemplation of the pictures, occasionally muttering "theoretical is it."

The next evening the Portage papers had an announcement in large type on the first page.

A SPLENDID GIFT TO PORTAGE

Josiah Lesser will erect a public fountain on the Square. Consent of council assured.

Work to begin immediately.

And the Seven gathered in the barn in conclave read aloud that article with unrestrained rejoicing.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEDICATION OF "CRUSADER HALL"

ONE Friday morning in October Durr reported that he had finished his aerial for the wireless telegraph. Early Saturday morning he drove to Portage, and the boys carefully removed the instruments from the barn and put them into Durr's buggy.

"Be at your station at five to-night," he said, "and I shall try to send you a message."

The boys were on hand at four and prepared for Durr's message. As the hour of five approached, Tom and Joe sat with their heads close together and eagerly watching the grains of carbon.

"Ting-a-ling."

The sound was faint but clear. Tom pressed the key in return. Joe then switched the detector into the circuit and put the receiver to his ear.

"I hear it," cried Joe excitedly. "Write down the message, Tom. Quick!"

Tom seized a pencil, and not finding a piece of paper wrote on the table.

"1122 — J. 21 — O. 12 — E. 2 — T. 21 — O. 1221 — M."

"333. That means end of message."

Joe put his finger in the key and slowly sent a reply to Durr.

"Emil. Shake hands, Joe."

Tom then tried his skill. The experience of the boys, gained by working at a short distance, had proved very valuable. The ether was soon full of messages between the attic and the farmhouse. After that, scarcely a day passed that some word was not sent to Durr, and the boys became very skilful in sending messages.

The work on the gymnasium had proceeded slowly, and it would not be ready for use until after Thanksgiving. The boys had worked faithfully with the carpenter until the extension was completed but, after that, football had occupied their interests. It had been decided to open the new hall immediately after the Thanksgiving game.

With this in view, the work had been pushed more rapidly. Crusader Hall, as it had been decided to call the gymnasium, was very attractive. The interior walls had been covered with a coat of fresh paint of a soft gray color. Small dressing rooms had been arranged in the corners. Electric lights close to the ceiling shed a brilliant radiance over the floor.

The opening of the hall was an event for which the boys prepared with much care. There was to be a reception and a short entertainment. Each member of the company invited his household and his immediate friends. No effort would be made to have a game or even a drill, as the floor would no doubt be crowded. The entertainment committee promised a good program but kept the various numbers a secret.

At last Friday night, the time set for the opening, arrived. The boys were on hand early. A curtain across one end of the hall shut off a small platform which was to be used as a stage. Folding chairs were piled along the walls in readiness for use during the entertainment.

The first persons to arrive were Mr. and Mrs. Barth. Captain Warren received them graciously and introduced Jimmie Harding, who stood next in the receiving line. Introductions were scarcely necessary, as nearly all the boys were by this time customers of Mr. Barth. Other guests arrived in quick succession and formed in little groups, chatting and commenting on the attractive appearance of the hall.

About eight o'clock the tooting of an automobile horn was heard, and a party arrived which caused a sensation. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt of Cleveland, their daughters Marion and Catherine, and their four nieces. They had all visited Camp

Crusader the preceding summer and were well known to the company. They were unexpected guests, as their coming had been arranged by Mr. Jackson, unknown to the others. Mr. Hoyt was overflowing with good spirits as he shook hands with his many friends.

"Well, well. Here we all are again. Joe, how do you do? What a vast Coliseum this is for the games of this mighty race of warriors. Art, you've grown in these few months. The nation is safe in the hands of this brave generation. Pat McGuire, this is a pleasure and an honor to grasp your hand again. There are the fair maidens eager for a look into your face."

So with each one Mr. Hoyt kept up a running fire of comments.

Pat and Joe faced each other. They had been equally attentive to Elsie Seymour, Mr. Hoyt's niece, during the summer's camp.

"Singly or together, Pat?" inquired Joe, as each realized the other's intention.

"United we go, divided you fall, Joe," replied Pat, so together they sought out Elsie to receive equally cordial greetings.

After half an hour of general conversation, Mr. Jackson mounted the small platform before the curtain and gained the attention of the guests.

"If you will all be seated," he announced, "we shall begin our program."

Chairs were quickly placed. Then Mr. Jackson made a short speech setting forth the use to which the building would be put and declaring it formally opened. Alice Miles sang a solo; Colonel Russell made a short stirring speech; and Adam Lesser recited a patriotic poem. Mrs. Kinsman received a round of applause as she came forward to the piano.

Mr. Jackson then announced that a dramatic performance would be given after a little interval. During the moments of waiting, some one called out, "Please ask Mr. Hoyt to make a speech." The cry was taken up and Mr. Hoyt, visibly embarrassed, was escorted to the platform.

"Friends," he began, as he faced the audience, "the cruelty of the unseen foe who cries aloud upon a fellow being for a speech is beyond description. What can I say that is not already apparent? That your ladies are beautiful? That your men are chivalrous? That your girls and boys are courteous and attractive? You know all that. No, let me be content with affirming that had not my heart been warm with friendship for you all, I should not have been here. I should have listened to the pleadings of my daughters and my nieces with firm determination not to yield. But desire leapt to the occasion, and the occasion, assisted by the young ladies, prompted the desire, and here I am. I congratulate you upon the completion of

this splendid hall and I count myself fortunate to be numbered among your guests."

Amidst applause Mr. Hoyt took his seat. Miss Marion was sitting next to him, and beyond her Mr. Jackson had found a place.

"Father," she remarked, "you have given Mr. Jackson the impression that we had to urge you to come."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Hoyt. "Oh, no. I assure you, Mr. Jackson, that they did not urge at all and came much against their will."

"Now, father," pleaded Marion, "that makes it worse. We wanted to come and so did you."

"True," admitted Mr. Hoyt. "I had forgotten. Yes, Mr. Jackson, I had no difficulty in bringing them. In fact, Marion said that if she had her choice among all the things she desired, she would rather come to Portage to-night than — than to stay at home alone."

"Oh, father," exclaimed Marion, and desisted from her efforts to set Mr. Jackson right. But that gentleman accepted gratefully the fact of their presence and did not seem much worried about their motives.

All was now ready for the play. The curtain was drawn aside and a strange scene met the eyes of the guests. Against a background of painted trees glowed a camp-fire. This had been produced by burying a red electric light bulb, attached to an

extension cord, under a little heap of sticks and oak leaves. The floor was likewise covered with oak leaves, the only material available in December. A stump stood in the foreground. A few sticks of incense, burning in the recesses of the camp-fire, caused a small column of smoke to arise.

"Those boys will burn the whole place up, having a bonfire right on the stage," gasped Mrs. Barth, not realizing the harmless nature of the camp-fire, so realistic was it. "They'll burn a hole in the floor, too." Mr. Barth quieted her fears.

Against the painted background paced a sentry, gun on shoulder. A boy in uniform walked wearily in. He wrapped himself in a blanket and throwing himself down by the fire went to sleep. Several other boys entered and went to sleep also. Suddenly two Indians entered stealthily, pounced upon the sentry and captured him before he could make an outcry. They carried him off to the right. Just then Joe, dressed as a scout, entered from the left. He wriggled along the floor through the leaves toward the stump. The boards of the stage creaked as he went, but the noise seemed not to disturb the sleepers. Joe crouched down behind the stump and looked intently in the direction of the departing Indians.

At this moment the camp-fire went out and left the stage in darkness. Some one struck a match

behind the scenes, adjusted a plug and the fire blazed up merrily again. The sleepers stirred uneasily, and a whisper in a rich brogue floated through the forest.

"Mind the cord, Joe." Pat was evidently sending back a message from the Land of Nod.

After deep slumber had again settled upon the soldiers, the Indians crept back on hands and knees. In their right hands they had tomahawks which they stopped to flourish. One of them gave a sudden lurch forward, but the blanket with which he was enveloped evidently caught on some nail which projected from the floor of the forest, for it failed to accompany the wearer. This revealed for a moment the brown khaki of the well-known Young Crusader uniform and confused the spectators. Had the Indian killed the sentry and taken his clothes? Or was he a friend in disguise? But the Indian crept back and crawled beneath the blanket. An outstretched hand, no doubt of some faithful squaw in attendance upon her brave, released the blanket and the advance began again. Just as the Indians reached the group of sleeping soldiers they stood upright. At the same moment Joe sprang up, a huge revolver in each hand and cried, "Surrender."

It was in vain. The Indians possibly did not understand English, for they began to run in the direction whence they came. Joe, apparently

chagrined at the Indian's lack of education and their rudeness in not obeying his request, stood a moment and then started in pursuit.

But his shout had aroused the sleepers. They arose at the same instant that Joe began his long chase across the stage. He had not counted on this, and his first plunge carried him into the midst of the half-erect figures. He stumbled, and came to the ground with a crash, carrying the ruins of a camp-fire and an army with him. As he struck the floor he shouted:

"Pursue and capture them."

The whole army arose and hastened off to the right. They must have been remarkable runners, for in spite of the long lead which the Indians had they were overtaken and dragged back upon the stage in an incredibly short time. Once there a process in tying began which would have made a surgeon, skilled in bandaging, green with envy. Those poor Indians were tied from every conceivable angle. As a final safeguard they were tied to the stump. But so strong is the native red man that a slight movement of restlessness uprooted that stump and hurled it upon the camp-fire.

It must have been a tragic presentation of the horrors of frontier warfare, for tears were streaming down the faces of many in the audience as the curtain was drawn over the scene.

The second scene represented a trial. The

camp-fire steadily blazed on without replenishing. The Indians, still bound, were brought to a drum-head. The sentry and the tomahawks were introduced in evidence. The Indians were sentenced to be shot and were led away. So the play ended, amidst cheers from the audience. The guests went home delighted with the efforts of the boys.

The hall became the center of the athletic activities of the company. Several basket-ball teams were formed, and many games were played among themselves as well as with other teams. But the meetings were still held each Friday in the High School, for the boys had become attached to their attractive room there, and it was difficult to arrange the hall for both meetings and a gymnasium.

The Wardens had had a long conference about the proposed trip to Washington and had decided that it was about time to take the boys into their confidence. Mr. Sumner agreed to present the matter at the second meeting in December.

There was almost a perfect attendance that night, for the rumor had gone about that some special announcement would be made. After the usual business Mr. Sumner arose.

"Mr. Chairman," he began, "I have some very good news to announce. The officials of the Railroad company have offered to the Young Crusaders the transportation and the use of a car for a trip to be taken early in the summer."

Silence fell upon the meeting. The boys could scarcely believe the announcement that was being made.

"The wardens have considered the matter, and we believe that it is possible to accept the offer. We have agreed that the most desirable place to visit is the capital of the nation, Washington."

It was evident that the unexpected news was making a strong impression upon the company. They sat with eager faces turned toward the speaker, intent upon every word.

"If nothing happens to prevent and if the company will prepare for such a journey, we shall, next June, just as soon as school closes, spend a week in camp in Washington."

This final assertion was greeted with an uproar of applause and approval. Three cheers were given with a will. When quiet was restored, Mr. Sumner resumed his talk.

"In order to do this thoroughly, we must prepare for it by a study of the city. On each Friday evening after New Year's we shall have a short lecture upon some point of interest in Washington. Mr. Kinsman will have the first three lectures on the Capitol. In the meantime I would suggest that each boy prepare himself by reading whatever he can find in the library about the Capitol."

"But perhaps we will not be allowed to go," suggested Dick.

"We have seen your parents and have obtained their permission in every case. Each boy will be expected to contribute to the general fund to pay for the camp. But as you have six months in which to do this you ought to have no difficulty."

Many questions were asked when the meeting broke up that night, and the excited boys went to their homes full of enthusiasm for the project.

When Joe remembered the next morning that Durr had been absent, he hastened to the attic and called him on the wireless. The good news about the trip was speedily sent, and Durr replied that he would go if he had to walk. For an hour the flashes of the current kept up. The skill of the operators had increased so that they handled their instruments with speed and accuracy. Tom came into the attic just as Durr had sent word that he must stop and get to his chores on the farm.

"Send one message for me, Joe," Tom requested.

"All right. I'll hold Durr. What is it?"

Tom wrote it on a scrap of paper and handed it over.

"Durr: Prepare to carry the flag to the White House. We hope to see the President. Warren."

In an instant the reply came.

"Warren: It will be the proudest day of our lives. Durr."

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT SNOW STORM

CHRISTMAS was drawing near. The shops on Main street were filled with people selecting gifts, the gay windows were making their appeal to the passers-by, and there was the usual preparation for parties and family gatherings. School closed the Thursday before Christmas week. Jimmie Harding and Art Miles had been invited by Emil Durr to go to the country with him to spend Friday and Saturday, and they were looking forward with much pleasure to these two days at Durr's hospitable home.

The Young Crusaders planned to have a sledding party on Friday. They were to meet at the High School at half-past twelve and spend the afternoon with their great bob sleds. Jimmie and Art did not like to miss this pleasure, but they had promised Durr, so they prepared to forego the Friday's sport at home.

After school on Thursday a wagon, mounted on runners, and drawn by two powerful horses driven by a man muffled to his ears, was waiting at the High School gate. Mr. Durr had come in to take

his son's guests to the farm. Durr had often remained in the city over night as the guest of the boys, and in appreciation of this favor Mr. Durr desired to make the boys' visit as pleasant as possible. The wagon bed was filled with straw and great blankets were piled under the seat.

As Jimmie, Art and Emil climbed into the wagon bed the others gathered around enviously, and waved a farewell. Mr. Durr spoke to his horses, and they moved off in stately fashion, the sleigh-bells jingling merrily. A volley of snowballs followed the wagon, some of which, hurled by skilled hands, made its occupants dodge with alacrity under the blankets. One snowball broke with a thud upon the broad back of Mr. Durr, who merely laughed and waved a hand without looking back.

It was an ideal winter day. The heavy snow had mantled the earth with white, and the trees were weighted with the burden. The roads were somewhat broken, but the horses had difficulty in places where the snow had drifted.

The boys enjoyed the bracing ride and scarcely realized that they had gone four miles when they turned into the open gate of Mr. Durr's yard. A large rambling farmhouse set back from the road and the smoke curling from several chimneys gave evidence of warm fireplaces and hospitality.

Jimmie and Art would not let Mr. Durr leave

them at the house, and they went to the barn and helped to put up the horses. Then, running through the tunnel-like paths, they came to the door of the great kitchen.

As Emil opened the door and allowed the boys to pass in, the delicious warmth and odor of a farm kitchen enveloped them. There stood Mrs. Durr, ample, kindly and efficient, pervading the scene with her wholesome personality.

"Come right in, boys, and get comfortable. We are very glad to see you. Just like boys to come to the kitchen first. Emil, put some wood in the stove. Here, sit down and warm your feet. You sit here, Lieutenant Harding."

Jimmie glanced quickly into the kindly face and laughed a little in an embarrassed way. Before he could recover himself, Mrs. Durr, noticing his confusion, continued:

"Emil told me you were both lieutenants, and that was the proper way to speak to you."

"Emil is always joking, Mrs. Durr," responded Jimmie. "My name is Jimmie, if you don't mind."

"All right, boys, get warm and Emil will show you your room. I'll stir a bit of supper together. Emil, you put the kettle over. Emil says you are light eaters and don't care for pie or jelly or preserved peaches and such like. I hope we can keep you well fed."

"Mrs. Durr," said Art solemnly, "Emil invited us especially because we are such universal eaters. Jimmie likes everything on the calendar, and so do I. We'll get even with Emil."

The hour before supper passed quickly. Durr took the two boys to the top of the house where, in a little gable, he had installed his wireless apparatus.

"I can talk with Joe any time he is at his uncle's."

"Try it now, Emil."

Emil turned on the current, pressed the key and the sparks flew. He threw a switch and waited.

"There's no answer. He's not there."

At supper the other members of the family appeared in the cosy dining-room. Emil had a brother Gustave and a sister Clara who attended the country school half a mile away. Mr. Durr came stamping in from the barn, shaking his great-coat.

"It's begun to snow again," he remarked, as he hung the lantern on a hook, "that will make the roads bad."

The supper was all that could be desired. It was impossible for anything but good nature to prevail at that table. After supper they all gathered about the fireplace in the living-room. Without it was snowing steadily, and through the win-

dows the sight of the white flakes whirling to the ground enhanced the sense of comfort within.

Bedtime came early at the Durrs', and by ten o'clock Art and Jimmie were soundly sleeping in a great four-poster in a large room next to Emil's. It was not quite light when they were awakened by Emil, who stood beside them. The odor of boiling coffee filled the house, and a faint sizzling from the region of the kitchen gave warning that breakfast was on the stove.

Refreshed and eager for a day's fun, the boys quickly dressed and reached the dining-room just as Mrs. Durr appeared from the kitchen with a huge platter of bacon and eggs.

"Right on the nick of time, boys. We have to get the children off early to school. This is the last day before vacation."

Gustave and his sister prepared to go to school. They wore heavy boots and warm leggings. Although the snow had fallen all night and was drifted high, a snow-plow pulled by a horse had opened up the usual path to the school. As they departed with their lunches in a small basket, Mrs. Durr said:

"If it gets too bad, Emil will come for you with the horse."

It gave promise of being a stormy day. The wind was blowing the snow into little drifts and ridges in the yard. By nine o'clock the boys, who

had purposed to walk over the farm and look at the rabbit traps, gave up this plan and went to the barn. The wind was getting stronger, and the falling snow was blown against the buildings and trees. When the boys returned to the house to examine again the wireless telegraph, they heard Mrs. Durr ask anxiously of her husband:

“Do you think that the roads will become impassable?”

“Oh, no! Mother, don’t worry. This wind won’t keep up.”

But it did. By the middle of the morning it had reached the proportions of a small gale, and it was impossible to see the barn.

Mr. Durr was growing uneasy. His wife spoke again.

“We ought not to have allowed the children to go out in the face of this storm. I fear they won’t be able to get back.”

“I think I’ll walk down to the school,” said Mr. Durr.

“We’ll go, too,” added Emil, and they made ready for the journey. It was nearly noon when they started. Mr. Durr had a long piece of rope with four loops tied in it.

“Take hold of this and keep together,” said he.

The storm was now raging, and the wind was howling in the trees. The party, with heads

down, beat against it to the gate. The road was completely obliterated, and the drifts grew higher and higher. It was bitterly cold. Suddenly Mr. Durr stopped. They huddled up close to him.

"We can't make it this way," he shouted. "Turn back to the house."

With difficulty they retraced their steps and gained the kitchen, panting with their exertions.

"We can't get through, mother," he said to the anxious Mrs. Durr. There was a note of alarm in his voice. He hurried to the telephone. After a long wait he got the central at the little substation several miles away. He asked if there were any reports about the roads or the school children. After listening he turned to the group.

"The operator says that the snow has drifted high and that no one can get through. The wires to Portage are down. Farmers are working to reach the school. They are hoping the wind will die down. One would get lost in this storm."

Mrs. Durr was very white.

"Don't fret, mother; the children are all right. They are safe in school. Miss Cartwright will not let them leave. They can keep warm and they have their lunches."

"But they can't stay there all night."

"No, we'll have to do something. The storm

may stop," and Mr. Durr went for the tenth time to the window. He could not see twenty feet. The wind was whirling the snow, and to their excited fancy it was worse and worse every minute.

"Won't the men be able to reach the school?" asked Jimmie.

"We'll try," and Mr. Durr spoke bravely, but with a note of trembling in his voice. He stepped again to the telephone and listened.

"They are talking all along the line. The storm must be worse in the valley." Here Mr. Durr realized that he was alarming his wife more and he stopped.

Jimmie whispered to Emil: "Let's go up to the wireless."

Emil gave him a startled look. "Why?"

"I'll tell you there."

The boys bounded up the stairs. Mr. Durr followed. When they reached the second floor, he said:

"Boys, I don't want to alarm Mrs. Durr, but the little I could hear on the 'phone seems to indicate that the schoolhouse is almost buried and that we cannot reach it without digging."

"Jimmie has an idea, father," interrupted Emil.

"What is it?"

"I suggest that we try to get Portage on the

wireless and get help from there. How far is the railroad track from the school? ”

“ Only about two hundred yards. Something ought to be done. Can you get Portage? ”

“ I’ll try, father.”

Emil turned to his instruments.

Joe Russell and Tom Warren were spending the morning in Uncle Russell’s attic. The storm which had enveloped the countryside was not quite so violent in Portage, but it was severe enough to cause the Young Crusaders to give up the idea of a coasting party.

Joe was assorting his tools, when he heard a slight tap of the bell on the wireless. He at once went to the instrument. It was faintly sounding Joe’s call. Throwing the switch he responded. Then came the message feebly, as if the atmospheric conditions were interfering. Joe listened intently and wrote down the letters as they sounded. Tom stood beside him, looking over his shoulder.

“ Old Emil does not forget us, does he? ” he remarked.

“ S-t-o-r-m. S-c-h-o-o-l h-o-u-s-e b-u-r-i-e-d b-y d-r-i-f-t-s. G-e-t h-e-l-p o-n r-a-i-l-r-o-a-d — w-e c-a-n-t r-e-a-c-h c-h-i-l-d-r-e-n.”

“ Whew! ” exclaimed Joe. “ What does that mean.”

"It means that the people can't get through the snow to the school, and Durr wants us to get to them from the railroad."

Joe sent but two letters "O. K."

He hurried down the stairs, with Tom following, into the library where Colonel Russell sat writing.

"Uncle," began Joe breathlessly, "the storm has buried the schoolhouse near Durrs' in the snow, and they want us to rescue the children."

"Hold on a minute, Joe. How do you know?"

"Durr called me on the wireless. He suggests that we get help to them from the railroad."

"Do you think this is a joke, Joe?"

"You don't know Durr, Uncle. Look at the snow. He meant it. What can we do?"

Colonel Russell sat for a few minutes thinking, and then went to the telephone. He had several long and earnest conversations before he returned.

"I have interested the officials of the railroad and they will send out a snow-plow, followed by an engine and a coach, but they can spare no men. It's now noon. They will be ready to start at one o'clock. We must get sufficient men to do the work after we get there."

"Why not get the boys, Uncle? We can get them quickly."

"All right, Joe. Tom, call Jerry from the barn.

Joe, you send Durr a message that help is on the way."

Within five minutes the boys and Jerry stood before the colonel again. They were astonished at his sudden transformation. He had on high boots, a sweater jacket and a fur cap.

"We'll have to act quickly. Jerry, you go to the hardware store and get them to send twenty shovels and twenty filled lanterns at once to the station. Then go to the restaurant and secure sandwiches, pies, milk and whatever else you can get, at once. Get it all to the station, and load it on the car and wait. Tom, you telephone the wardens, and send in a call for the boys. Joe, you send word to Durr, telling him to telephone the people about there that we shall get to that school-house if it takes all night."

The boys went off on their several errands. The word of the sudden call for the Young Crusaders soon spread. Each boy notified was told to get his neighbors. It was not long before they began to arrive at the station, eager for definite news of their errand. With them came many citizens. The wind had now ceased, but the snow still fell. There were many volunteers to accompany the expedition, and Colonel Russell selected several men from among them. One was a physician.

At one o'clock everything was ready. Jerry had done his work well and the car had many boxes

of provisions stored in it. A bob-sled drove up with an immense coffee urn which a restaurant keeper in his enthusiasm loaned for the project.

Upon the track stood the snow-plow and directly behind it a large engine with the car. At the command all climbed aboard, the whistle blew, and the bell rang. At the last moment several officials came aboard. One of them had a small box under his arm.

Slowly the plow moved away from the station, throwing the snow in an immense cloud by its revolving blades.

The train followed, creeping behind the plow. Progress was slow, but steadily they left the town and came into the open country. Here they could see how exceptional the snowfall had been. The tracks were slightly elevated, and the drifts had not affected them so much, but the countryside was covered with drifts like the swelling waves of the ocean. The boys, looking from the car windows, could see nothing but snow and tree tops in every direction.

After going on for half an hour the train stopped.

"Here we are," cried one of the trainmen. "The school is in that direction," he added, pointing through a window.

There was a rush to that side of the car. The land dipped to a somewhat lower level, and about

six hundred feet distant a column of smoke could be seen rising.

"There's the school," shouted several at once, and all soon distinguished it. Upon one side the drift had reached the eaves, but on the other it apparently reached only the upper sash of the windows. Between the track and the school was an unbroken mass of snow.

Colonel Russell's voice was heard in the midst of the confusion.

"Attention."

Every one listened.

"We shall have to proceed with system," he said. "First the engineer will turn a stream of hot water into the snow near the track so we may see how deep it is. Then the first platoon of Young Crusaders will take these shovels and go to work. But we must wait until the engineer has done his part."

In a few minutes a hot stream from the engine was directed into the snow alongside the track. This revealed the fact that the snow was about five feet deep at this point. Luckily the wind had died down and the snow was no longer drifting. Tom led the first platoon from the train into the space cleared by the hot water. Colonel Russell and the wardens stood on the platform prepared to hand down shovels.

It was difficult to determine exactly how to start

the work. There seemed to be no place to heap up the snow from any path. At length Mr. Sumner, jumping off and taking a shovel, said:

"Here, Tom, you and I will break a sort of ravine into the drift, and the rest of you pack the snow with your feet."

His plan worked. Mr. Sumner and Tom sliced into the snow with their shovels and beat it down. Behind them came the boys, three abreast, stamping it under foot and packing it as hard as possible.

"Many feet make light work," remarked Pat, jumping upon the snow.

The passage thus forming was guided by directions from those in the train. Progress was slow, but it was sure and effective. After fifteen minutes the second platoon was put to work, and the first withdrew to the car to rest and get warm. The men, too, were now at work with the shovels. After an hour's labor the passage had been pushed fifty feet into the snow bank.

"It will take us twelve hours at this rate," said Colonel Russell, in a discouraged voice.

But fortune favored them. The depth of snow suddenly decreased to three feet. They pushed through this at almost a slow walk, and the next hour found them within fifty feet of the school.

In the meantime one of the railroad officials had worked his way, with the help of the boys, to a

telegraph pole and had climbed it. He carried his little box, and in some way mysterious to those below, he had soon attached the box to the wire and was sending messages to Portage.

CHAPTER XI

THE RESCUE AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE

DURR, Art and Jimmie, when the fury of the storm had ceased, went to the high gable. From that point they saw the arrival of the train and knew that rescuers were at work. This news they telephoned about the country. The reassured farmers and country folk, snowbound, but making every effort to break paths, soon desisted from their ineffective personal efforts and sat indoors awaiting the bulletins over the 'phones.

Within fifty feet of the school the snow became deeper. It was now half-past three and darkness would come on within an hour. The whole company was summoned.

Mr. Sumner directed that three tunnels be started into the drifts and that those not in the tunnel should tramp down the snow in a big circle at the edge of the drift, as fast as it was carried out. The tunnels were started at least twenty feet apart and it was arranged so they would meet about twenty-five feet from the starting point.

All were puzzled by this, at first, but they soon realized that it had a double purpose. It was a safeguard against any one's being caught beyond a cave-in and also a provision for quick removal of snow. The boys with shovels would enter the center passage, go to its end and get a shovel full of snow and return by a side passage. Thus they did not interfere with each other. It also kept the whole company at work and their activity kept them warm.

Foot by foot they approached the school. The roofs of the tunnels kept falling in from their own weight, but the snow was light and no one was hurt. A constant procession of boys passed in and out, carrying the snow to the circle which had been stamped down. By four o'clock they were within ten feet of the school. It had now grown so dark that the lanterns were lighted. In little niches in the tunnel walls stood the torch bearers. Foot by foot they made headway. As the excitement of the hour grew, they worked furiously, as if the school were in danger of disappearing before they could reach it. Colonel Russell entered the tunnel and went to the very end.

"Keep it up, boys," he encouraged. "We're almost there; only a foot or two yet."

Even as he spoke a mass of snow fell from the head of the tunnel and disclosed the side of the school.

"Turn to the left," he shouted, "there's no window here."

To the left they turned. The boys were crowding into the tunnel from the rear, obstructing progress. A solemn hush had fallen on the whole party. In a few minutes the corner of a window was revealed. Colonel Russell stepped up, and wiping the snow from the glass, looked in. Everyone stopped his work and listened to hear what he reported.

It was an affecting sight that met the colonel's eyes. The room, which had been darkened by the obstruction of the windows, was lighted by a single lamp upon the teacher's desk. In the open space about the desk stood the whole school in a circle, playing "The Farmer in the Dell." Miss Cartwright, her face showing her anxiety but her outward demeanor cheerful and unconcerned, was in the circle.

The colonel tapped on the window, saying as he did so: "They are all right. Pass the word along."

An excited cheer went ringing out through the tunnel, and Miss Cartwright hastened to the window.

The colonel shouted to her: "We'll be in very soon. Don't be alarmed."

The children gathered around her and in the dim light watched the snow curtain disappear

from the window sash. Miss Cartwright then opened the window, and the colonel, Mr. Sumner and Tom Warren climbed in. They were soon followed by Mr. Kinsman and several others.

"Hello, children," said the colonel. "Do you think I'm Santa Claus? Here, Tom, you guard the window. Let no one else in. And now, boys and girls, we're going to take care of you. How are they all, Miss Cartwright?"

Miss Cartwright was sobbing when the colonel turned to her. She was a young girl scarcely twenty-one, and the strain had been almost too great for her. The colonel patted her on the shoulder.

"You are a brave young lady and we're here to help. Have a little cry and then help us get these little ones bundled up. What do you think, children! Your fathers and mothers all know that we've come to get you."

"They haven't realized, except the older ones, that we have been in danger," Miss Cartwright said. "We have played games nearly all the afternoon. Can they get home?"

"We'll take care of all of you," answered the colonel, "and now get into your wraps. Where are your overshoes, young lady?" and the colonel glanced at Miss Cartwright's feet.

"I gave them to one of the girls yesterday, and she did not come to-day."

"So, that's it. Well, we'll have an automobile for you," and the colonel chuckled. "Tom, help the older boys from the window. Have them go directly to the car."

There were forty children in the school, but only a few older ones. They stepped upon a chair and into the waiting hands outside. When the smaller ones' turn came, each was placed on the sturdy back of a large boy, and clinging there was carried through the tunnel, with a squad of lantern-bearers lighting the way. Boys came up eagerly and asked for a burden. Finally only Miss Cartwright, the colonel, Mr. Sumner and Tom remained.

"Now, Mr. Sumner, you and Tom step out and make a king's-chair."

"No, no," protested the teacher. "I can walk."

"Madam," said the colonel, his beaming face belying his stern voice, "you are the princess on this occasion, and a whole magic chair is yours. We should all be unhappy otherwise."

With a faint blush she stepped to the window and was soon firmly seated in the king's-chair, one hand resting lightly on the shoulder of each of her cavaliers. The colonel blew out the light, and climbed out of the window, closing it after him.

Most of the party had remained at the little circle beyond the first tunnel to await the last of the rescued. When Mr. Sumner and Tom ap-

peared with the teacher carried between them, there arose a cheer that was heard even to the train.

"It's for you, Miss Cartwright," whispered Mr. Sumner.

By the dim light of the lanterns they took their way along the path, and all were soon in the train. There was no delay and the train began its speedy journey to Portage. The anxious little children, seated in the coach, held hands and looked in wonder at the boys and men. The appearance of the teacher gave them courage and she went to each one in turn, assuring them that they would be well taken care of.

They were not prepared for the reception at Portage station. A great crowd had gathered, as the news of the rescue had been telegraphed in by an official. The parkway about the station was a fairy land of light and shadow caused by the lamps of a score of waiting automobiles. A dozen men crowded about offering to help.

"Take every child to my house," was the colonel's command, as the party came off the car.

The machines were soon loaded. There was no definite arrangement, but the children were kept in groups, and soon the colonel's house was filled with the children and the men from the automobiles.

The confusion was so great that the colonel finally said:

"Miss Cartwright, please take the school upstairs and look after them a little while."

When this was done, the colonel turned to the waiting guests.

"Mrs. Harding wants to take care of some of them," began Mr. Harding. "I'll take them right along. We'd like the teacher, too."

"So should we," began half a dozen others.

"Mr. Sumner, take Mr. Harding up-stairs and have Miss Cartwright assign him a few children. Take their names so we may know where they go, in case the parents are able to call up. Miss Cartwright remains here for supper," he said firmly.

As each applied, this plan was carried out, and soon the children were enjoying good suppers and warm beds at a score of comfortable homes.

In the meantime Joe and Tom had hastened to the attic. The wireless was soon in operation, and Durr had signaled that he was listening.

"The children are in Portage." Joe's nimble fingers clicked off the message. "All well and cared for. No cause for worry. Telephone to every home."

Durr's response came back at once. "O. K. Three cheers. Good for Portage."

In about ten minutes the sounder again began. "Joe."

Joe responded with the usual signal.

"Everybody notified and happy. Mother sends love to Gustave and Clara and tells them to mind their manners."

The talking kept up for an hour. Tom took Mr. Sumner's list, telephoned each house, and got a "good night" message from each child to his parents. This Joe sent to Durr, and Jimmie and Art telephoned it along the farmers' line.

The excitement was over and the colonel stood in his library. Edna Cartwright sat before the fire. Mr. and Mrs. Kinsman, who had just arrived, were laying off their wraps in the hall.

Anna Kinsman, with that generous hearted impulsiveness that was not the least of her charms, did not wait for an introduction, but rushed up to the little teacher and kissed her heartily.

"You are to come home with us after supper. I am so glad."

"Thank you. I was wondering what was to become of me," answered the teacher, with a pleasant laugh.

"My dear," said Colonel Russell with a solemn bow, "you have had exactly forty invitations to be the guest at forty homes. You are the most invited young lady that ever came to Portage. It has given me a brain storm to think of excuses enough to satisfy all those who invited you. But I have reserved the pleasure of your company for Mrs.

Kinsman, because," here the colonel paused, "because she deserves good fortune, and it will give you both pleasure to know each other."

"Colonel Russell," said Anna, "it's no wonder people like to do things for you. Hello, here are the boys."

Joe and Tom stood in the door.

"Come right in, boys," said the colonel. "Here's one section of your king's-chair, Miss Cartwright, and the other will be here in a few minutes. Can't separate a young lady from her traveling necessities, you know. Supper will soon be ready."

"Mrs. Durr sent a message to one of the little girls named Edna," began Joe, "but we couldn't find any Edna on the list. She said 'Give dear little Edna our love.' Can you help us out, Miss Cartwright?"

The teacher looked in confusion at Joe's serious face.

"Why, I'm the only Edna," she said.

It was Joe's turn to be confused. A slow red crept over his cheeks. Anna laughed.

"It's all right, Joe. Give her the message."

Joe's courage came back. He said, steadily looking straight at Miss Cartwright: "Mrs. Durr sent her love to dear Edna."

"But how?"

"By the wireless."

"Oh, you are the boys that Emil sends messages to. Well, I declare! So you are Joe. Emil says you are three dots and a dash, or something like that. Can you send a message back?"

"Oh, yes. What is it?"

"Please say: 'Edna sends love to Mrs. Durr, and she is well and happy.' What is the charge?"

Joe was equal to the occasion. "We take the miller's fee."

"How is that?"

"A little toll, say ten per cent., on every article sent over the line," and Joe said it quietly and sedately.

"Ten per cent. of love to Mrs. Durr is friendship for you, Mr. Joe. It's yours. Divide it between you."

With a laugh and a "thank you" Joe and Tom mounted the stairs again to send the message.

Mr. Sumner soon came.

"And now we'll go to supper," said the colonel. "Mr. Sumner, will you take Miss Cartwright out?"

But the mischievous Edna could not resist a sudden impulse to recall her previous experience.

"But your floors are dry, Colonel Russell, and I am able to walk."

Whereat Mr. Sumner returned in a flash, pretending disappointment: "But aren't we fair weather friends, too?"

So the gay party partook of the colonel's hospitality, and later Mr. Sumner accompanied Miss Cartwright with John and Anna Kinsman to their home.

That night at the Durr home a happy group gathered about the fire discussing the day's events.

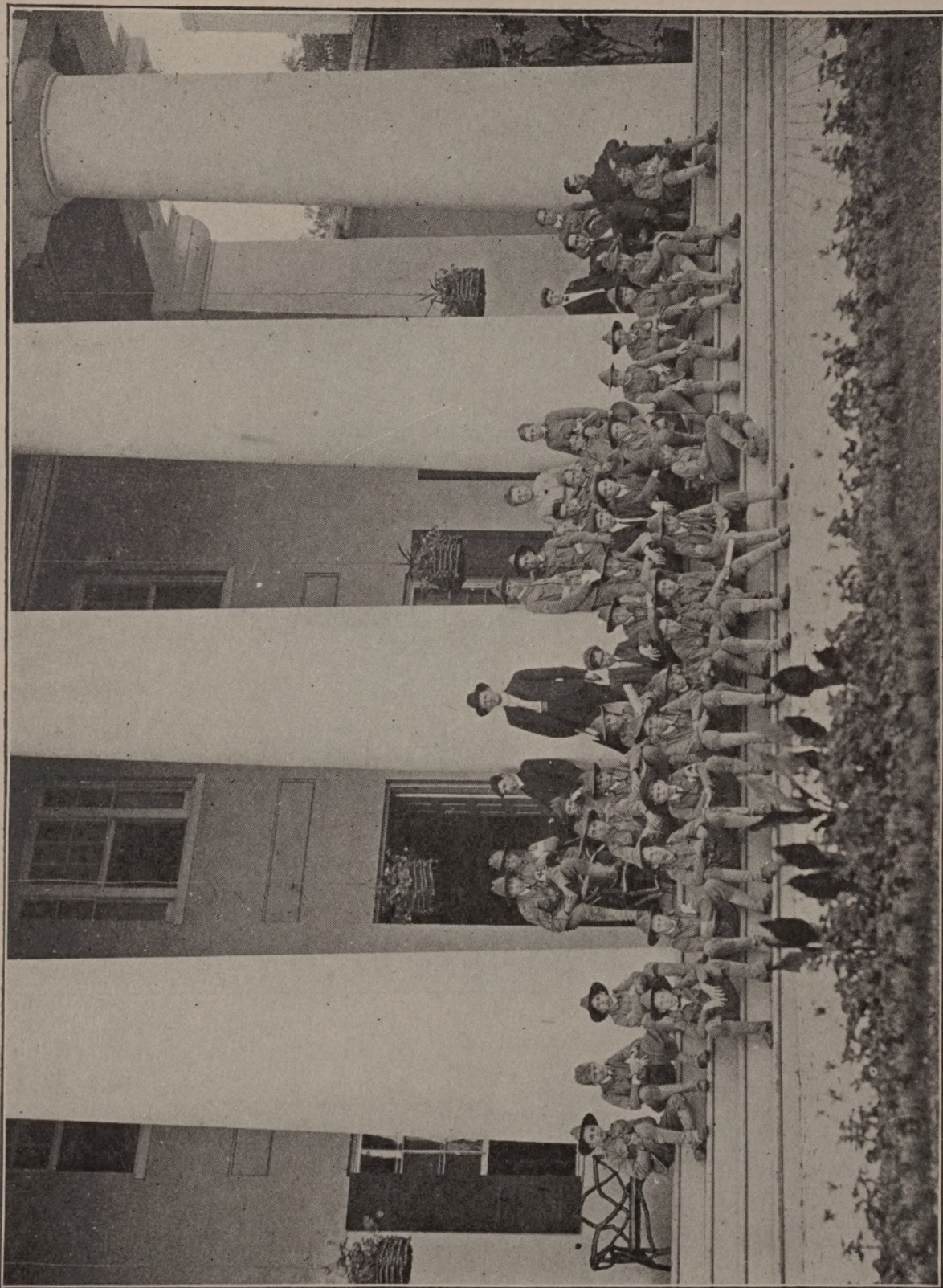
"I am glad that Gustave and Clara are at our house, Mrs. Durr," said Art. "Alice will have a fine time with them."

Mrs. Durr had been very quiet. "We have a good deal to be thankful for, Arthur. I am glad, too, that they were at your home. And, Emil, I am glad that you wasted your time with that 'wireless.' It's wonderful that God's love is so great that he prepares to save the children from danger by a boy's plaything." Thus Emil had his reward.

The next day they all worked hard to dig paths to the barn to care for the stock. By the following day roads had been broken to the station, and on Sunday the morning train brought out its load of children to the fathers waiting with sleighs. All were in charge of Mr. Sumner and Mr. and Mrs. Kinsman. Each child came back with eager tales of kindness and good cheer, and laden with mysterious packages, to be opened on Christmas day. The older people took dinner with the Durrs. But Miss Cartwright did not stay in the country, for Mrs. Kinsman had invited her to

spend the vacation in Portage and she had consented.

Whether it was by a curious coincidence or by some well laid plan, we know not, but every family in Portage that had cared for the children had, at Christmas dinner that year, one of a score of the largest turkeys that the countryside afforded.



They became more interested in the house when they learned that it had been
the home of General Robert E. Lee. See page 220.

CHAPTER XII

THE THEFT OF THE COINS

PATRICK MCGUIRE'S father was inclined to think that a boy could get along well enough without going to Washington.

"I agreed to let ye go, Pat, but ye must earn the money for your expenses."

"Thank you, sir," was Pat's dutiful reply. "Then I must get to work."

"What can ye do, Pat?"

"I'll find something. If you don't mind my saying so, father, I am going with the others."

"All right, my boy. And I'll wish ye good luck."

Pat sought out Mr. Kinsman and laid the case before him.

"Well, Pat, I have just had a letter from a publisher asking me to recommend some bright person to sell a book in Portage. How would you like to do that?"

"I can try, Mr. Kinsman. What is the book?"

"A history of England, in one volume."

"Another!" exclaimed Pat. "I thought every

family had that history we use in school. Did England have two histories?"

"A great many, Pat. It is a good book and many people would enjoy it."

"Must I take it from door to door, like brooms?"

"That's the usual method. Start with people who read."

"Will they hand the money right out through the door without looking at the book?"

Mr. Kinsman laughed. "No, you will have to get into the house and persuade the people that they cannot raise children or bake bread or have a happy home without this history. You must stimulate their interest and arouse their curiosity."

"Couldn't I sell it all wrapped up as a surprise? I was reading the other day that people were mighty fond of a fish pond even if 'they only drew out some rig-a-ma-gig to put something in they ain't got.'"

"You've been reading some Indiana philosopher, Pat. You ought to read this history and then you could talk about it."

"Read a whole book of history! Why, I would be so full of dates that I couldn't get my clothes on. But I'll try."

Pat sent for the books, and several days later a large package reached him by express. He opened it eagerly and counted over the neat vol-

umes. There were twenty of them. That very night he read a little of the history and the next afternoon he set out on his task. Going to a remote section of the city, he approached a house, mounted the steps and rang the bell. A maid appeared.

"Would you like to buy a history of England?" began Pat.

"No, thank you," said the maid, and closed the door.

Pat stood in surprise for a moment. "I ought to ask for the missis," he reflected.

At the next house he was fortunate in finding the "missis" in the open door.

"Here's a fine history of England, ma'am," and Pat placed it in her hands. "It's only two dollars, and I have the change for a five dollar bill, if that's all you have."

The woman looked at Pat's serious face and realized that he was dead in earnest.

"I do not care for it, young man," she said kindly and handed it back.

Pat said "Thank you," and hastened off.

"They don't give me time to tell its value. I'll try once more."

At the next house a man appeared. This put Pat more at his ease.

"Good afternoon. Would you be needing a fine history of England? It has all the dates and

the kings and queens," and here Pat paused, unable to proceed.

The man took the book and looked at it. "It's all right, my boy, but does it tell what to do to an automobile when it stops dead ten miles from home?"

"That's in the last chapter, if anywhere," replied Pat.

"I am afraid it is not there," said the man, handing back the book.

"You could write it in the blank pages, sir, and it's all for the same price."

"Not to-day," replied the man.

Pat turned away. He went home and early in the evening he sought out Mr. Kinsman and told him his difficulties.

"You must manage to get into the house, Pat, and take time to tell some of the fine features of the book."

"But they won't let me in. They all seem to know the history of England already."

"Try to devise a plan to get in."

Pat sat up late that night. He spent some time writing notes on attractive stationery, one of his unused Christmas gifts. He consulted the history frequently.

The next afternoon he returned to his labors. He rang the bell of a pretentious house. A maid came to the door.

"I have a note for the 'missis.' Is she home?"

The maid looked sharply at him but a little envelope in Pat's hand was an evidence of his truthfulness.

"Come in."

She ushered him into the drawing room and told him to wait there. In a moment a large woman, wearing diamonds and dressed beyond the height of fashion, appeared.

"Have you a note for me, boy?"

"Yes, ma'am, and I'm to wait for an answer."

She took the envelope from his hand and tore it open. Unfolding the inclosed paper she gave a single glance and then looked at Pat in evident perplexity.

"Why, I don't understand."

Pat was silent.

She took the sheet of paper to the window and examined it again. It contained but a single sentence: "What is a butt of malmsey?"

Turning again to Pat she exclaimed: "Who sent this note?"

"I did, ma'am. It's a question that every one ought to know the answer to. You can't read Shakespeare without knowing that."

The woman gazed in utmost astonishment at him.

"This book, ma'am," and Pat produced it, "answers that question. It tells how Richard the

Third had the Duke of Clarence drowned in a barrel of wine. A barrel is a butt and the wine was malmsey. It gives English history from the time of Cæsar to the present day. Your children will read it with profit. Everybody's talking about English history nowadays."

"How do you know that?"

Pat knew it only from his limited experience in High School classes.

"I hear it most every day, ma'am. And if the Duke of Newcastle does come to Portage next year it would be fine to have all the society people know all about his land. He'll expect it from educated people like yourself, ma'am."

"You seem pretty young to know so much," said the matron cautiously. "How do you know that the Duke of Newcastle is coming here?"

Pat squirmed in his chair. He was beginning to fear he had talked too much.

"You'll be needing it in your library, ma'am, even if he doesn't come. All the best people have history in their library."

This random shot went home. The thought had long been in that matron's mind that a little self-improvement would not be amiss.

"I'll take two copies, one for the library and one for my den. That will be convenient. I will not have to send down-stairs for the book when I want to read history."

The surprised boy took the money and produced a second book from the package he had left outside the front door. Jubilant over his success he went to the next place. Here he confronted the lady of the house.

"Here's a note for you, if you please, and I'll wait for an answer."

The motherly looking woman took it and escorted the boy into a cozy library, where books abounded. She asked Pat to be seated and sat down herself near a table. With a small paper-knife she opened the note, and adjusting her glasses, read it carefully. It, too, had but one sentence:

"What was Queen Victoria's maiden name?"

"Who wants this information, young man?" and the quiet question was accompanied by a careful scrutiny of the lad.

"It's one of my own worries, ma'am. I didn't know until last night that queens had maiden names. But I found a book with it in, and I thought you might like to know it, too," and Pat handed her the history.

She took it gravely and turned the pages. "Are you selling this book?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who wrote that note?"

"I did."

"Why?"

Pat's memory here served him in good stead.

"To stimulate interest and arouse curiosity."

The lady laughed. "Would you leave it with me this evening that I may examine it?"

"Certainly, ma'am, and you will find the queen's maiden name on page 551."

"I'll look later. Please come to-morrow afternoon."

Pat took his departure, satisfied with his day's work. The next afternoon he returned to the house, hopeful yet uncertain. Again he was seated in the comfortable library. His prospective customer at once began to speak.

"I am president of a club that is about to study English history. I have been searching for a text book and I find this one just suited to my needs. Could you supply fifteen copies at once?"

"Why, — why, yes, ma'am," stammered the surprised boy, "and it's very good of you. I'll go and get them."

In an hour they were in that library and Pat had a check for thirty dollars in his pocket. He haunted the bank next morning until the doors opened. When he had secured his money, he sent a post-office order to the publisher to pay for the books. He had ten dollars and three books left. These he determined to sell later. That night he went to his father.

"Father, will you take care of a little money for me until I go to Washington?"

"What, did ye raise it?" asked Mr. McGuire.

"Yes, sir; ten dollars."

"How did you do it?"

"By taking advantage of a sudden rise in English history. I sold seventeen histories in three days. I could never see before what good history was. Now I know. You gain wisdom by experience, as Mr. Kinsman says."

"Yes, ye rascal. You've got the wisdom and the money, and the others have the experience and the histories. But I'll be as good as my word. Ye'll go to Washington, and when ye do, remember me to the President," and Mr. McGuire put Pat's money in his purse and took up the evening paper.

"He'll never forget you, father," remarked Pat, as he was about to depart through the open door.

"Eh, what's that?" asked Mr. McGuire, looking up from his paper.

"The President will never forget you, father, because he never knew you."

"I'll furnish you with a first-class thrashing, Pat, when I'm not busy," and the good-natured threat reached the boy's ears as he hastened from the house.

Pat hunted up Dick Brewer, and together they went to Harding's barn. The Seven had been summoned by Art Miles. Art was full of suppressed excitement as the boys gathered in conclave behind the curtain.

"We have a real task on our hands, boys. But first I must swear you to secrecy for the time being."

They promised to keep Art's secret.

"You know," resumed Art, "that my father had a valuable collection of coins. It's been stolen."

Art waited for this fact to impress itself upon their minds. The boys looked hard at him and at each other, hardly knowing what to say.

"Who stole them?" asked the straightforward Jimmie.

"If we knew that, Jimmie, we should have no trouble getting back the coins, but we don't know. Father is trying to find out."

"How did it happen?"

"He doesn't know. The collection was in its place this morning, but at noon father looked into the drawer and every coin was gone."

"Who had been in the house during the day?"

"Mother says that a book agent called in the morning, and later a plumber came, saying that he had been sent by father to fix a leaking gas fixture in the library. He worked about fifteen minutes and then reported that he could not find any leak. Father said at noon that he had not ordered the plumber to come up. That's not all. Father went to the plumber's shop and accidentally found one of the coins right on the work bench."

"Whew! That looks suspicious. What did the plumber say?"

"He asserted that he knew nothing about it, and could not understand how the coin came there."

"Who is the plumber?"

"That's the queer part of it. It was Mr. Ross, Ed Ross' father."

Ed Ross was one of the Young Crusaders, and this news was startling to the boys.

"He wouldn't do it," asserted Tom. "We all know Mr. Ross."

"Plumbers never use that method of taking collections of coins," remarked Pat. "They are more direct."

"This is no joking matter, Pat," declared Tom. "What does your father think about it, Art?"

"He hardly knows what to think. He doesn't like to accuse Mr. Ross, and yet he found the coin right there. He is going to keep quiet about it for a while and try to learn more."

"What about the book agent?" asked Leo Inwood. "Several reckless book agents have been working in Portage lately," and he glanced at Pat.

But Pat was not to be disturbed. "I can prove an alkali," he declared.

"You mean an alibi, Pat, and I bet you don't know what it means."

"You are wrong there, even if I should have said an alibi. It means being seen one place and proving you were somewhere else.. I was in school and my thoughts were in India with the snakes and elephants. Ask the geography teacher."

"That excuses you, Pat. But who was this book agent?"

"Father did not seem to pay much attention to the fact of his visit," admitted Art.

"Skip home, Art, and ask your mother if she left the book agent alone in the room."

Art departed on his errand.

"I was in my father's office last Saturday and a book agent called," said Tom. "He was a short man with a dark complexion and a little scar on his cheek. You remember him, Joe; you were there."

"That's so. We wondered if the scar came from a fight."

The others had not seen this particular man, but the scar seemed to impress them, and in their thought he was at once connected with the theft. While they were discussing this possibility, Art returned breathless.

"Mother says that while the book agent was there she heard a knock at the back door. She answered it and there was a man trying to sell a fireless cooker. It took her five minutes to get rid of him. The agent was alone during that time."

"That was time enough to get the coins," said Harding. "Your father has not tried to find the agent."

"No, he did not suspect him. Mother did not realize until I asked her that she had left the agent alone in the house."

"He's the man to look up, Art. Better tell your father to-night. The collection was very valuable, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed. There were a good many coins of no great value, but ten or twelve worth nearly a thousand dollars altogether. There was one siege-piece worth two hundred dollars."

"What is a siege-piece, Art?" inquired Tom.

"That's a coin issued in a town or sometimes a large castle during a siege. You know how certain cities in England stood by Charles I when he was fighting Cromwell. Several cities were besieged, and the king's forces shut in. The siege-pieces were used there. This one was issued at Carlisle. It's irregular in form, something like a small diamond-shaped cracker."

"I should like to see that," declared Joe. "No wonder your father wants to get it back. Don't you suppose he could find the agent?"

"He might. But father is anxious to keep the facts out of the papers for a while, so he has not set the police to work."

"Here's a job for us," continued Joe. "Let's

search the town to-morrow and look for the man with the scar on his cheek."

It was agreed to do this after school. Mr. Miles set a private detective to work on the same search. Mr. Ross was much disturbed over the affair, but Mr. Miles assured him that suspicion was resting on the book agent. Mr. Ross said that the order to go to the Miles home had come over the telephone.

"That was part of the scheme," declared Mr. Miles. "After getting the coins, he telephoned you to place suspicion on you. Then either the book agent or his confederate called here and left the coin."

But Mr. Ross was uneasy and urged Mr. Miles to do all in his power to find the thief, promising to help in every way possible.

In the afternoon the boys walked the streets of Portage in every direction, but saw nothing of the agent. The detective was likewise unsuccessful. Mr. Miles then took steps to inform every coin collector or dealer, whose name he could secure, of the loss of the coins. He offered a reward of one hundred dollars for information that might lead to the arrest of the thief, but he learned nothing. The agent could not be traced.

The Seven considered the whole matter during several meetings. Mr. Miles had succeeded in keeping the matter out of the papers, but many



The Young Crusaders had reached their camping-place. See page 183.

knew of it. The boys realized that Mr. Ross was uncomfortable on account of the coin found in his shop, for he felt that suspicion might be still directed toward him. His boy clearly showed that he knew all the facts.

"It is not right that Ed Ross should feel as if I suspected his father," said Art, at the meeting of the Seven.

"Why not tell him so?"

"I don't like to. The only thing that can straighten it out would be to catch the thief. That looks impossible now."

"He will try to sell the coins some day and then he will be caught."

"Yes, but he will probably wait for a long time until every one has forgotten about the theft."

The mystery proved an unending source of discussion among the Seven. Several plans for tracing the agent were proposed but not one seemed practicable. So their concern about the lost coins finally was displaced by their interest in the trip to Washington.

CHAPTER XIII

PREPARING FOR THE TRIP TO WASHINGTON

FOR nearly two months before the time set for the trip to Washington the wardens were busy with the necessary preparations. Colonel Russell had become interested and had written to a friend who was rector of a large church in Georgetown, a section of Washington, asking for assistance in the selection of a suitable place for a camp. The rector in reply had offered the use of the parish house of the church and the large yard in which it stood. This generous offer was immediately and gratefully accepted. The United States Senator from Ohio and several other friends of the boys gave their aid also, and the many problems were solved and the difficulties met. Through the kindness of the senator, tents were to be secured from the War Department and erected in the yard. Major Frederick of Washington, formerly a resident of Portage, was asked to secure permission for the Young Crusaders to call upon the President. The rector made arrangements for a caterer to have breakfasts and suppers at the camp.

Generous citizens of Portage contributed to a fund which was being raised to defray a part of the expenses of the trip. It was soon found possible to assure every member of the company that no one need be left behind, even though he found it impossible to meet the assessment.

At a meeting of the company three weeks before the time set for their departure, Mr. Sumner presented a report of the plans made for the care and comfort of the boys while in Washington. There was great rejoicing as they realized that the trip was becoming more and more a certainty and would soon be a reality. To each one was given a list of the things necessary for his personal use during the journey.

Jimmie Harding came running into the school yard one afternoon, waving his hat. A group of the boys who were discussing the trip realized that Jimmie must have some good news.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "we are to see the President. Mr. Sumner has just had a telegram from Washington."

"When will we see him?" The question came from several at once.

"On the very day we get there, at noon."

"That will be a fine beginning for the trip," gleefully exclaimed little Joe.

"Do you suppose they will let me see the President, too?" wistfully asked Adam Lesser.

"Why not, Adam?" asked Tom.

"My father is a democrat."

A shout of laughter arose.

"No, indeed, Adam," Pat assured him. "Unless you fought in the war and ride horseback and have a dozen brothers and sisters, you can't see him."

But Adam by this time realized that his fears were groundless, and he grinned at Pat's fun.

"What will you say to him, Adam?" asked Joe.

But Adam was not prepared to answer. Pat answered for him.

"Adam will put out his hand and say: 'I'm glad to meet you and I hope the family is all well.'"

"What will you say yourself, Pat?" asked Joe.

"I won't say a word, but I'll just give him a knowin' look, meanin' we both understand that the country is safe in our hands."

"Some one will have to say something, won't they, Jimmie?" asked the artless Adam.

"Yes, indeed. I'll just say this: 'We have Joe Russell with us, Mr. President, if you need any inventing done about the White House.'"

"Will we be introduced and shake hands?" asked Larry Brush.

"Oh, no," replied Pat. "We'll gather outside a window. The Secretary of War will come out and search us for concealed weapons, and then the

President will come to the window and look us over. He will then direct the Secretary of the Treasury to throw us a handful of pennies and we will scramble for them. Then it will be over."

The ringing of the school bell stopped their talk, but each went to his work conscious of the honor bestowed upon the organization by the President.

The same afternoon there appeared on the blackboard the mysterious symbols calling a meeting of the Seven. When they assembled in Jimmie Harding's barn that night, Tom startled them with a bit of news.

"Ed Ross can't go to Washington."

"Why not?"

"His father won't let him. He is very much disturbed by the theft of the coins and thinks that people believe him guilty. So he won't let Ed go."

"Who told you?" asked Art.

"Ed told me so himself."

"That's a shame," declared Art. "Father does not suspect Mr. Ross. What can we do about it?"

There was a long and earnest discussion, but with no results. That night Art Miles found his father in the library.

"Father," said Art, "Mr. Ross will not allow Ed to go to Washington with us because of the suspicion aroused by the theft of the coins."

Mr. Miles looked at his son earnestly.

"If that is the case, I think I ought to tell you that I have a letter which satisfies me that the thief is not in Portage."

Mr. Miles unlocked a drawer in his desk and took out a soiled envelope. Drawing from it a slip of paper he handed it to Art. It was half a sheet of note-paper on which was written a message in a disguised hand. Art read it aloud.

"If you will give \$200 to have your coins back, insert merely this item, 'X Y Z write X Y Z,' in personal column of the New York Herald of June 1st."

"When did this come, father?"

"Yesterday."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I shall do nothing about it whatever. I would only lose more money. But it seems clear that whoever wrote this letter is in New York. It has the New York postmark."

"Will you show Mr. Ross this letter and speak to him about letting Ed go?"

"Yes, I will."

The next day Mr. Miles had another interview with Mr. Ross, and assured him that no suspicion rested on him. But Mr. Ross felt that the incident had been very unfortunate for his son, and that perhaps the boys might make him feel uncomfortable. He thought it better to keep Ed at home.

"But that will simply make matters worse," said Mr. Miles.

Mr. Ross finally promised to think it over and not to make a decision at once. This was reported to the Seven.

"We must make Mr. Ross feel that no one is down on Ed. He is a square boy and we ought to stand by him," asserted Tom.

At the next meeting of the Young Crusaders Mr. Sumner announced the completed plans for the trip. Nearly everything was in readiness.

"We have secured a physician to go with us and also a photographer," he said. "But there is one thing more. We shall need one reliable boy to be commissary sergeant, to assist the wardens in keeping the accounts and handling the funds. We want a boy that can be depended upon and one that you trust. The company ought to elect him tonight."

"Mr. Chairman," spoke up Art Miles, "I nominate Ed Ross."

The other members of the Seven were on their feet in an instant, each trying to second the nomination.

There were no other nominations, and Ross was elected unanimously. It was a light-hearted boy who, that night, told his father of the responsible position to which he had been elected, and an

honest father rejoiced that his son had not been made to suffer through an unfortunate incident.

The boys were now occupied with the closing days of school and the necessary examinations. As the day for departure for Washington drew near, they were so engaged with personal preparations that even the Seven did not find time to meet. Mothers were giving their son's clothing a final inspection, and fathers were asking questions as to the practical details of the trip. The wardens were busy assuring whole families that the boys would not be permitted to step off moving trains or investigate the interior of whirring machinery.

Mrs. Kinsman and her mother, Mrs. Marshall, left Portage for Washington two days before the company. They were to be the guests of friends there during the camp. The wardens held many conferences and completed the necessary arrangements with the Railroad Company.

Joe and Tom paid a final visit to their attic retreat in Colonel Russell's house to set things in order.

"What's become of your kite, Joe?" Tom asked the question as he noted its absence.

"I gave it to Andy Gilmour. He's flying it every day."

Joe sat down at the table and began to write a letter, working slowly and with many pauses.

Tom was searching among their various possessions.

"Joe, where's that little magic lantern you used to have up here?"

"I gave it away." Joe bent earnestly to his work as he replied.

"Whom did you give it to?"

Joe pretended not to hear.

"Who's got it?" persisted Tom.

"I gave it to Andy, I think. How do you spell Capitol, meaning the building?"

"With an 'o': C-a-p-i-t-o-l," and Tom went on looking about.

"Joe, the wireless needs a little tinkering. Where's your knife with the screw-driver attachment?"

"Somewhere around probably. Don't bother me."

"But I want it. It isn't in the chest."

"Look on the floor."

"It isn't there."

"I guess I gave it to Andy to fix up the lantern. Let a fellow write a letter, will you?"

Tom laughed. He reached for an envelope, wrote an address upon it and handed it to Joe.

"You are no doubt writing to Andy," said Tom, "so I addressed the envelope."

Joe tossed the envelope aside and declared

boldly: "This letter goes to Cleveland. That's farther than your letters ever go, Tom."

Tom looked at him with a solemn face.

"I'll tell Pat on you."

"Oh, that's all right. Let me show you something." Joe opened another envelope and drew forth a small kodak, showing the attractive features of Elsie Seymour, taken with her own camera at the camp the summer before.

"You stole it, Joe."

Joe refused to reply. Tom looked carefully at the picture and then started for the door, picking up his hat as he went.

"Here, where are you going?"

"Oh, I was just going over to give it to Andy."

Joe grinned. "I draw the line there," he said.

"Very well. But it's not generous to give away only what you don't want yourself. Any one could do that."

Tom threw his hat on the table and handed back the picture.

"Now if you have finished your heavy correspondence, let's get at this work."

And Colonel Russell would hardly have known the attic if he had taken the trouble to examine it after the boys had carefully protected their treasures for what seemed to them a long absence.

CHAPTER XIV

A NIGHT IN A PULLMAN CAR

THE eventful day arrived at last. Early after dinner, on Friday, the third of June, the Young Crusaders began to gather at the High School. Although the order had been given that the company should assemble at three o'clock, every boy was on hand an hour before that time. A large dray stood ready to carry the trunks to the station.

Each boy brought a rubber blanket, in which he had securely tied his clothing. This was packed into one of the trunks. The company itself was preparing to go in light marching order. Even the guns were left behind, except those necessary for the guards. An air of expectancy and suppressed excitement had seized the whole company. It seemed hardly possible to the boys that the long awaited journey was now close at hand.

Many parents came to the scene to make final requests of the wardens for the welfare of their sons. The sisters and friends likewise hovered about. Alice Miles approached Mr. Jackson, with a smiling complaint on her lips.

“Why can't girls go to camp and go to Wash-

ington, too, Mr. Jackson? The boys have all the fun."

"It's too late now, Alice," said Mr. Jackson seriously, looking at his watch. "You ought to have spoken of it this morning."

At last the trunks were filled and loaded on the wagons. The company was formed and taken into its meeting room for some few final instructions. They were given by Mr. Sumner, and were vigorous and to the point. If any boy had any doubt as to the character of obedience expected on the journey it was dispelled by that speech.

Again under command, the company marched to the street. Here several unexpected things happened. A good neighbor gave a large bunch of carnations to Captain Warren to be distributed with her compliments. Upon the street, drawn up in military fashion, was a drum corps from a Portage organization, an escort for the company. A messenger boy arrived with a telegram for Mr. Kinsman. He read it on the spot.

"JOHN KINSMAN,

"Portage.

"Expect to meet you in Washington with all my party.

LEWIS HOYT."

Mr. Kinsman showed the telegram to the wardens, who were evidently well pleased with this unexpected news.

At last the preparations for departure were finished. The loaded dray started off. The drum corps stood at "Attention" ready to begin its lively music, while the company, in perfect alignment, awaited the eventful word.

Mr. Sumner approached Captain Warren, and saluted.

"Captain Warren, you may take your command to the station."

Saluting, the captain wheeled and faced the company.

"Company, forward, march."

The drum corps began a lively air. Durr lifted the flag on high, and the Young Crusaders, with alert steps, fell into time with the music, and moved briskly forward amidst the cheering crowd. The trip to Washington had begun!

Through the crowded business section of Portage marched the company. The music never slackened and the mile walk seemed to take but a few minutes.

It was thrilling to realize the variety and depth of emotion that was stirring in the hearts beating fast beneath those brown khaki uniforms. The fresh, keen faces and bright eyes clearly revealed it. Here were boys, moving in lines under a single impulse and in obedience to command, who were tasting all the concentrated and carefree joy of boyhood. There were boys who had never been

out of the county; boys who had never slept away from home except at the camp; boys who had never seen a city or a mountain, or a river or a steamboat. Washington to them was as remote as Europe is to their elders. As they formed in platoons of twelve, reaching from curb to curb, the eye which glanced from one soldierly little back to another may have seen only the outer dignity of trained youth, but to those who understood, it was a revelation of the faith of boys. With but little or no money in their pockets, with no assurance than another's word for their care and safety, they stepped happily yet seriously toward the train that was to carry them away from every association and protection of their homes.

The wardens felt this most keenly on the long march to the station, when the realization of the full meaning of their undertaking came upon them.

But serious thoughts were soon dispelled by the necessity for action. As the company swept into the parkway about the station, an involuntary exclamation arose.

"There she is."

In plain sight, appearing to them the most majestic vehicle ever used by man, stood a glistening Pullman car. It almost seemed as if a mighty railroad company had assumed the habit of a kindly fairy to have actually provided right there at the old familiar station, for a crowd of boys, and

right on the very minute of its promise, such a magnificent creation as a Pullman car.

Upon the station platform were gathered other groups who had come to say good-by. One group, however, had the air of travelers. They were the Camp Followers, and consisted of a physician, a photographer and five civilian boys who, though not members of the company, had been invited by the wardens to make the journey. The physician and the photographer became at once useful and companionable members of the party, and the other boys were cordially welcomed.

When the trunks had been safely stored in the baggage car, the order was given to enter the Pullman. Probably that car had never carried such an enthusiastic band of passengers. It was completely filled, four boys to a section. The wardens took possession of the stateroom at the end.

The local train, which was to convey the car to the main line junction a few miles distant, soon pulled in and the Crusader Special was coupled on. Amidst cheers and the waving of hands and hats, the train moved from the station. When the junction was reached the Special was uncoupled from the other cars of the local, and with engine in readiness, awaited the arrival of the Flyer from Cleveland. It was not many minutes before it appeared far up the track, speeding toward the junction. It was a splendid train, with dining-

car, observation-car, and many sleepers. With the grinding of wheels, as the air brake was applied, it came majestically to a full stop. Quickly as possible, the Crusader Special was switched on to the main track and coupled to the last car of the Flyer. The bell rang, the conductor gave the signal, and the long journey on the great iron highway was resumed, the Special this time in company with its peers.

The Pullman became at once the object of minute scrutiny from the boys. Every device was examined. Every boy had to wash his hands in the metal bowl and to ring the call bell for the distracted porter. Inasmuch as he found that the boys wanted nothing but to hear the bell ring he appealed to Mr. Jackson.

"See hyah, general, dose boys am ringing dat bell and it keeps me jumpin' about, but I don't fin' no one what wants anything."

"That's all right, porter; just pay no attention to it. If the boys annoy you, come to me, but don't worry about the bell. Have you a picture of the Goddess of Liberty?"

"No, sah! Don't know the lady, sah, but I ain't been on dis line very long."

"Well, here's her picture mounted on silver. Just keep that to remember us by," and Mr. Jackson handed the startled darkey a silver dollar.

"He-he! I know her, sah, but I didn't know

her first name. She's a littl' ol' fren' of mine. Thank you, sah."

The train had now attained full headway and was speeding sixty miles an hour, through the beautiful rolling country of Eastern Ohio. Small towns sprang into view, and then dropped away. With a crashing roar westbound trains were passed. Daylight began to fade, and a splendid sunset in the west was the beautiful close of a brilliant June day. As the lamps were lighted and the landscape no longer could be seen distinctly, the boys settled down to their suppers. These they had brought with them. Scarcely had they eaten when the train entered the Pittsburgh district. Its lights, the glow from great manufacturing plants, the brilliancy of pleasure parks and the lighted steamboats kept the attention and prompted scores of questions. The wardens answered as well as they could, but it was impossible to satisfy the demand.

When the Crusader Special pulled into the great station at Pittsburgh, permission was given to leave the car, and to take a short walk on the platform in the train shed. Here the boys got their first impression of the immense traffic of a metropolitan center. The long, well-lighted trains, nearly a dozen of them, stood side by side, awaiting their burdens of humanity. Before twenty-four hours that group of cars would be

scattered in every direction. Some would be across the Mississippi River, while others would be in New England, and still others far away in the sunny South.

The stop at Pittsburgh was brief. Upon re-entering the car, the boys found the dusky porter preparing their beds. They watched him with great interest.

"How many sleep on each shelf?" asked Pat.

"Two," said Jimmie.

"And who sleeps in the little hammock? Not I."

"No, you sleep alone, Pat."

"Where?" asked Pat.

"On the upper shelf of six," answered Jimmie. "We have forty-seven boys, and the car holds forty-eight, four to each section. But at midnight the porter crawls in with you for the rest of the night."

Pat's face fell.

The boys prepared for bed amidst much confusion. As the car was the last one on the train, no passengers had occasion to pass through. The wardens had cautioned the boys to do no damage, but it was useless to restrain their nervous enthusiasm. Now four boys would be in one lower berth and the visit would be returned. Every boy that appeared in the aisle had to run the gauntlet. He was slapped with every available garment.

"Tom," said Joe to his bunk mate, "I must have a drink of water."

"Speak to one of the wardens, Joe. It will be as much as your life is worth to go down that aisle."

"Not much," affirmed Joe; "I am going," and with head down and on a swift run he braved the dangers and secured his drink of water. He was detained a few minutes by the wardens, who were in their stateroom. Joe then stood at the end of the aisle waiting for a good chance to return to his berth, but his return was expected and each section showed an eager group of four heads and four waving arms, each hand grasping its instrument of torture.

Joe waited.

At this moment the porter, who was immune from interference by command of the wardens, appeared from the other end of the car and approached the center. He stopped, and then stepping up and standing astride the aisle on the sides of opposite berths, he prepared to adjust the lights.

This momentarily attracted the attention of the waiting "Indians," and Joe saw his opportunity. Taking one look at the figure of the porter, which loomed up above the highway like the Colossus of Rhodes, he stooped low and with head down made a dash, intent upon passing beneath the dusky figure. At the same moment the porter, whose back was turned toward Joe, stepped down into the

aisle. But Joe, his eyes upon the floor and warding off blows, never faltered. At full speed he crashed head first into that porter just as the porter was putting his foot on the floor. There was a thud and then both sprawled into the aisle, amidst cheers from both lower and upper berths, "the orchestra and the gallery," as Pat said afterwards.

The porter picked himself up and seemed to be making up his mind whether he ought to annihilate Joe or not, when the wardens reached the spot.

"That young rascal he done make a dent in me dat I'll carry all mah days."

Joe looked pretty solemn. "I didn't mean to."

"Well, young fellow, ef you make as much trouble when you don't mean to I hopes I'll never get in you' tracks when you do mean to."

"Go to bed, Joe," said Mr. Kinsman. "You come with us, porter, and we will give you something to make you forget your troubles."

The porter soon had a second Goddess of Liberty in his pocket.

The car became quiet, but there was not much sleep. Many of the boys preferred to get the view from the car windows. The moon arose and revealed the glories of the mountains of Pennsylvania. The train slowly wound up the mountains and the depths of the mysterious valleys were partially disclosed in the glowing moonlight. Many

were awake when the train curved about the famous Horseshoe bend. The wardens finally commanded every one to be absolutely quiet, and stillness settled over the car. As Mr. Sumner made his last trip of inspection before going to sleep, Pat McGuire raised up from his berth and whispered to him:

“When is that porter coming to bed?”

“Why, what do you mean, Pat?”

“Jimmie told me that the porter would have to sleep with me, as I have a berth all alone.”

“Jimmie was only letting his imagination get the better of his truthfulness, Pat,” laughed Mr. Sumner. “The porter sleeps in the smoking-room.”

“And here I’ve lain awake two hours waiting to see that he kept on his own side. I’m a green-horn, Mr. Sumner, but I’ll get even with Jimmie,” and he did, but not for several days.

At six o’clock the wardens awoke and looked out into the car. There had been a transformation. The porter had been at work early and the sleepless boys had preferred the open seats to the hot berths. Every berth had been dismantled and in each seat was a sleepy boy tired and quiet, watching the changed landscape and quaint stone houses of the country about the nation’s capital. The giant willows overhanging the rivers, and the whitewashed houses standing against the green

hillsides, made a picturesque panorama for the observers.

But with breakfast their spirits began to rise, and with eagerness they waited for the first glimpse of Washington. The train, with frequent stops, was soon creeping through the outer yards of the city. From the windows the boys kept watch for anything which the pictures in their school books had made familiar to them.

"Look," shouted several voices at once from on the right side of the train, "there's the Capitol."

They had but a moment's glimpse, but it was enough to give them the vision of the majestic lines of the nation's chief building on its eminence. It looked strangely familiar, on account of their long acquaintance with its picture in the High School auditorium, but it was the first glimpse of the beauty of the nation's foremost city, and it gave them a lively sense of the pleasure to come.

At last the train pulled into the shed of the station and the Young Crusaders left the car and assembled on the platform. A group of friends of the wardens had gathered to welcome the company and cordial greetings were exchanged. It took but a few minutes to arrange for the baggage and then the company left the station. At first it seemed that Washington was a city of narrow, commercial streets, but after a short march they reached a wider thoroughfare. As they turned into it they

faced again the center of their expectations, the Capitol, glistening white under the brightness of that June morning.

"Company, halt!"

"This is Pennsylvania Avenue," said Mr. Kinsman so that all could hear.

Pennsylvania Avenue! To their minds came little scraps of knowledge that their histories had contained and the newspapers had made known. The avenue of the nation's life with the Capitol and White House and other buildings of the government; the avenue through which the President passed on the day of the inauguration; the avenue that had seen the great review of the army at the close of the Civil War. It was to them an experience fraught with deepest interest, to march, as thousands of soldiers had done before, on the historic highway.

"We will board a street car for the camp," remarked Mr. Kinsman.

In twenty minutes the Young Crusaders had reached their camping place in a quiet and old-fashioned, but beautiful and aristocratic section, Georgetown, and Camp President Roosevelt, so named by permission of the President, had begun.

CHAPTER XV

THE RECEPTION AT THE WHITE HOUSE

A COMFORTABLE and attractive place had been prepared to receive the company. The parish house was large and the yard adjoining more than sufficient for the necessary tents. The first floor was to be used as a reception room and dining room. Headquarters were established in a little room on the second floor at the head of the stairs. Some of the boys would sleep in the other rooms on the second floor, while some would occupy the tents. One tent was reserved for the wardens, two of whom had charge of the yard, while one slept in the house.

The house had been freshly cleaned and curtains hung at the windows. Some friends of the boys had placed flowers upon the large mantels, an expression of welcome much appreciated by the company.

There was scarcely time to get a good look at the camp, when the bugler blew Assembly. Mr. Kinsman announced that the company would proceed in half an hour to the White House and in-

structed each boy to prepare for the event. Then began the hasty preparations. Travel-soiled faces were scoured clean and dusty shoes were polished. The company looked its best when the order to march was given.

The trip was made upon the street car. On reaching Lafayette Square the company left the car, and prepared to enter the park, called the President's Park, in which stood the Executive Mansion, better known to the nation as the White House.

The simple dignity of the White House, standing in quiet beauty amidst the trees and shrubbery of the park, was at once apparent. The company halted a moment at the gate that the boys might get a careful view of the surroundings.

"When was the White House built, Mr. Jackson?" The question came from Durr.

"Washington laid the cornerstone in 1792 and it was finished before he died. He inspected the complete building, but never lived in it. President Adams was its first occupant."

"Where do they roll Easter eggs?"

"On the other side, down the great sloping lawn that reaches to the Monument. The children gather here on Easter Monday and it is a great spectacle."

"Is the White House of white marble?"

"No, it is of Virginia freestone. But the build-

ing was burned by the British in 1814 and only the walls were left standing. When it was rebuilt the walls were painted white to conceal the marks of the fire."

"Are cities always burned in war?"

"No. The burning of Washington caused great indignation in England. It was denounced by the papers of London and in the House of Commons."

"That little building is the office, isn't it?"

"Yes. It became too difficult for the President to transact public business in the White House. So an Executive office was built to the westward. It is connected with the White House by the low esplanade."

"Shall we see the interior of the White House?"

"Yes. After we have met the President."

The command was given, and the company marched up to the broad driveway to the Executive office. Here they halted. Mr. Sumner went in and reported to the officer in charge that the Young Crusaders were at hand to pay their respects to the President. He was told that the Ambassador from the Court of St. James was at that moment with the President and that he would not be at liberty until a few moments after the appointed hour. The wardens were invited to wait in the room used for the meetings of the Presi-

dent's cabinet. Here they stood by the long table, before which were the chairs occupied by the various cabinet officers at the meetings. Each was marked with a silver plate. The President's office adjoined the cabinet room. When the ambassador had taken his leave, several other waiting guests were received by the President, who came into the cabinet room for that purpose. The wardens, from the opposite side of the room, were able to see the manner in which the many visitors of each day were greeted. There was a marked politeness on the part of every attendant, and the cordiality of the President was impressive. Now it was a graduate of the same college who was presented, and received a fraternal greeting. Now it was an army officer, who was congratulated upon his service record. Now it was some distinguished foreigner, to whom the President spoke a kindly and discriminating word of the visitor's own country. At last the officer in charge requested the wardens to see that the company was ready.

In the meantime the boys were waiting patiently in a long line. They were commenting on everything in sight.

"Joe," said Harding, "don't forget to tell the President that you would have known him from his picture. That's the proper remark."

"You try it, Jimmie. He couldn't say the same thing about you. I seriously doubt whether he has

even heard of you. What will you do, Pat, if he asks you to lunch? ”

Pat looked puzzled and alarmed for a moment at that most remote possibility, but he recovered in time to reply:

“ Oh, I’ll ask him if I must bring my knife, fork and spoon, same as at camp.”

The reappearance of the wardens stopped the talking. The boys removed their hats, and preceded by the wardens, marched in single file through the outer office to the door of the cabinet room. The officer in charge then introduced the wardens to the President, who stood in the cabinet room, just outside the door of his office. His greeting was most cordial and he complimented the men on their undertaking.

“ And I wish to meet each boy and to shake hands with him.”

Mr. Sumner introduced the boys, while the other wardens assisted at the reception.

“ Mr. President, this is Captain Tom Warren.”

“ I am very glad to meet you, Captain Warren,” and the President gave Tom’s hand a hearty shake. “ You have a fine company of soldiers. All in Rough Rider uniform, too.”

Tom looked very pleased and replied that they were very glad to be there.

In quick succession the boys were introduced. To each the President gave a cordial greeting and

at the same time kept up a running fire of comment, and even stopped the line to tell a story. When the boys had passed, another group was introduced by Mr. Sumner. They were the rector, by whose courtesy the parish house was used, members of his family, Major Frederick, who had done so much for the company, and who proved to be already known to the President, Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Kinsman, several other Washington friends, and the camp followers.

When all had been received, the President turned to Mr. Sumner. "Mr. Sumner, I hope that you and Mr. Kinsman and Mr. Jackson will find no difficulty in making your boys enjoy Washington. Colonel," and here he turned to an officer in charge, "I want them to see everything in Washington. Will you please see that they are accorded every privilege."

With a final word, he then retired to his office, and the delightful reception was over. All went away conscious that they had been in contact with a great man of noble ideals and splendid purpose, a man who in himself embodied the highest qualities of head and heart of American manhood. It was a proud moment for the members of the company, and each one felt the magnetism of the forceful personality of President Roosevelt.¹

¹ The company, whose actual experience forms the outline of this story, was received by President Roosevelt at the White House at noon on June 4, 1904.

It was realized later that the President's instructions were carried out, for at every subsequent visit to government institutions the company was expected and welcomed. They seemed to have special privileges and to secure unusual attention.

The boys were then conducted through the great public rooms of the White House. In succession they viewed the East Room, the enormous state parlor, used for receptions; the oval Blue Room, in which the President holds his receptions; the Green Room with its many portraits of our Presidents; the Red Room, with the famous picture of Washington, which Mrs. Dolly Madison saved from the pillage of the British by a flight across the Potomac with the canvas in her possession; and the attractive state dining-room.

It was evident that the President was soon to entertain guests, for the massive mahogany table was laid with glistening silver, snow-white damask, and sparkling glass. It was an agreeable sight to the hungry boys, but its splendor was somewhat dazzling to those who felt more at home at the rough tables under the glorious trees at Camp Crusader.

"Mr. Sumner," whispered Pat, "there are only sixteen places and there are over forty of us."

"That means that some of us would go hungry, Pat. We must hurry off before we're invited."

Upon leaving the White House, the company was formed upon the street, facing the State, War and Navy Building. Here they became the object of unusual attention from the citizens. It was a very warm day and Lafayette Square looked cool and inviting. The wardens realized that a short respite would not be amiss, so under the shade of a large tree the boys had a half-hour rest.

According to an arrangement made with a restaurant in the heart of the city, the boys were taken there to lunch. The restaurant was cool and inviting, and the hungry soldiers were soon enjoying themselves and talking over their experience.

"What did he finally say to you, Pat?" asked Joe.

"He didn't say anything," spoke up Jimmie. "I was right behind Pat. He just gave one look and turned his head away. In winter Pat's hair looks like the aurora borealis, but on a hot summer day it is like a conflagration."

"Never mind, Jimmie, my boy. I owed you one for keeping me awake last night waiting for the porter. I was about to forgive you a moment ago, when I saw your sweet innocent face looking longingly over the bill of fare, but I've changed my mind. Look out, Jimmie, for my turn's coming."

After lunch it was decided to return to camp and get ready for the long sojourn there. The boys were tired from their sleepless night, and there was

much to be done. When the company broke ranks in the yard, each boy prepared to make himself comfortable. The blankets were unwrapped, and the personal possessions stored under the cots. As evening came on, a common impulse moved them. Some one had gained certain information from the caterer who was busy with preparations for supper. Dick Brewer gave utterance to the impulse.

"Mr. Kinsman, is there a place to swim about here?"

"No, I think not, Dick."

"Oh, I thought there was."

Fred Ewing had about the same time approached Mr. Sumner.

"Mr. Sumner," and it was one of probably a thousand questions that had been asked of him that day, "how far is the Potomac?"

"Oh, I don't know, Fred. Probably several miles."

"The caterer says that it is not as far as that, but is right down the next street. It's a historic river, isn't it?"

"Somewhat, I believe."

"Don't you think we ought to see it some time?"

"Certainly, Fred."

"There doesn't seem to be much else to do just now, and several of the boys have brought their bathing suits."

Mr. Sumner glanced up sharply.

"Do you want to go swimming, Fred?"

"Why, we shouldn't mind, Mr. Sumner, now that you've suggested it."

"Well, I'll see if Mr. Jackson will take you."

Mr. Jackson had not been left in ignorance of the special nearness of the Potomac. Leo Inwood had approached him.

"It's been pretty warm, Mr. Jackson."

"Yes, indeed, Leo. It's a comfort that we don't have to leave camp again to-day, isn't it?"

"That's right, Mr. Jackson. Nothing but some famous sight would induce me to leave. We haven't seen the Potomac yet, have we?"

"Not yet, but we shall soon, from the Washington Monument."

"Yes," assented Leo. "We ought to see that. Is it very deep?"

"I believe so, Leo."

"Deep enough to swim in?"

"Probably."

"The caterer says it's right down the next street. Don't you think we ought to find out if it's deep enough to swim in?"

"Yes, indeed. We can ask some one to-morrow."

"Perhaps some of us ought to go and find out now."

"Yes, you rascal; you want to swim, don't you?"

"We should like to."

"Well, I'll ask Mr. Kinsman if he will take you."

The wardens, acting under the same impulse, found each other at headquarters. When the true state of affairs was made plain, each one, tired from his work and the heat, groaned at the strenuous boys.

"That's what comes from taking them to see the President," declared Mr. Kinsman.

Mr. Sumner was busy preparing three slips of paper. Upon one was written *Swimming Master*; and he put the three folded slips into a hat. He passed the hat to Mr. Kinsman, who drew out a slip without a word. It was a blank. When Mr. Jackson opened his slip, he gave one look at it and then, saying something that sounded like "stung," picked up his hat and left. In five minutes a crowd of boys, with Mr. Jackson at their head, started for the Potomac.

Upon their return supper was ready. After supper the yard became a scene of activity. A curious crowd of boys from the neighborhood gathered on the sidewalk and exchanged compliments with the visitors. Some of the neighbors came into the yard and were received by the officers and wardens. The boys themselves began to sing familiar



In the afternoon they visited Mount St. Alban. Page 195.

songs, in front of one of the tents. The photographer and the doctor told stories to an interested group.

At nine o'clock Joe blew Tattoo and at nine fifteen, Taps. But the boys were long in going to sleep that night and the wardens were busy, on account of the restlessness. Three guards were stationed at ten, and they were changed every two hours. They were more needed than in camp, as there were loiterers about the streets.

The wardens sat in headquarters, going over the day's events, and making plans for the next day. It was after midnight and the boys were asleep, when suddenly a voice was heard in the hall, calling quietly, "Mr. Kinsman, Mr. Sumner."

Mr. Sumner went down and found Ewing, who was on sentry duty.

"Say, Mr. Sumner. A big fellow went by just now, and told me he was coming back to give us a call. Say, if he comes, shall I give him the bayonet, or shall I give him the butt of the gun, or shall I run?"

Mr. Sumner laughed. "Give him the butt of the gun, and call for help."

"Well, he'd better not come back."

He didn't. The night passed peacefully, and the boys arose late. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. The company went in a body to the church of their friend the rector, and heard a

rousing sermon. In the afternoon they visited Mount St. Alban, the site of the great Washington cathedral. The evening was spent in camp, entertaining their many visitors. The quiet day gave them a much needed rest, and when Monday dawned, it found the boys eager and ready for the many sights of Washington.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAPITOL: ALSO A DISCOVERY

ON Monday morning the company prepared to visit the Capitol building. The start was made early and it was not ten o'clock when the boys alighted from the street car and formed on Pennsylvania Avenue. Before them on its stately eminence, noble in its proportion, graceful in its lines and majestic in its architecture, stood the building which, more than any other, meant to them Washington. Under the white light of that June morning, the arched dome, rising from its peristyle of Corinthian columns and holding aloft its bronze figure of Liberty, stood out with startling clearness against the blue sky. The broad terrace, with its massive walls which stretched before the whole length of the building, the long flight of marble steps which led by easy ascent from the sweeping curve of the street, made an impressive foreground for the picture. The boys were deeply moved by the august beauty of their nation's Capitol.

"Is this the front of the building, Mr. Jackson?" asked Warren, as they halted to get a new view.

"No; the building faces east. This is the west side. The original builders thought the city would grow toward the east, but it has grown west. This approach, however, is very beautiful, and perhaps quite as imposing as the eastern approach."

The company was now set in motion. Up the great flight of steps they went toward the west doors. They had not gone far when an orderly appeared from the building, making all possible haste toward the marching column. The orderly apparently had some message for the boys, and Mr. Sumner directed the captain to halt the company.

The orderly went directly to Mr. Sumner and said hastily: "You can't do that, sir."

"Do what, if you please?"

"March in armed force in the Capitol precincts. You must break ranks."

"We certainly did not intend to attack the government, or even the flower beds, but of course we will do as you say."

"Attention, company. Each platoon will go in informal order with the warden in charge of the platoon. Break ranks. There, sir, you have routed a whole army. Is that satisfactory?"

The orderly laughed and replied: "Quite so."

"I am sorry," continued Mr. Sumner, "that we appeared to defy the government. Were they pretty well frightened up there?"

"Not very, but we must enforce the regulation."

"You are quite right. We shall now proceed peaceably."

But this unfavorable beginning was followed by a marked courtesy when the boys had arrived on the great terrace and had turned to view the panorama stretched before them. There came, to offer them the hospitality of the government, a messenger from the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate.

For a whole morning they were taken from one point to another of the building. It was a rare treat. In the Senate Chamber they were allowed to sit in the seat of their good friend, the senator from Ohio. They watched the Supreme Court in deliberation, and sent messages across the whispering gallery. From the dome they viewed the city with its radiating streets and the vast amphitheatre of the Potomac. For the third time in their history were the great Rogers bronze doors closed, that a photograph might be had with the boys before them. With pride, they looked upon the statues of great Americans in Statuary Hall.

At last, weary and satisfied, they began to settle in the rotunda. Tom and Joe were leaning against a column, resting, when a guide approached.

"Will you see the building, gentlemen? I can take you all about in an hour."

Was it possible that there was a single guide who did not know of their presence there? He had evidently just arrived on the scene.

"No, thank you," Tom replied.

"You cannot see it thoroughly without a guide. You will miss the meanings of the countless paintings, setting forth in fact, figure and allegory, the deeds of great Americans and the crises in our nation's history. You will not —"

"Hold on," said Joe, "I don't want to go around, but I will give you a quarter to answer a few questions."

"Very well," said the guide. Joe handed over the quarter.

The guide was a young man with a look of indecision in his face. Just as the bargain was made, Pat joined them.

"Whose statue is that out in front?" asked Joe, pointing through the door.

"That, gentlemen," began the guide in a formal way, as if he had learned it by heart, "is the famous Greenough statue of Washington."

"George Washington?" inquired Pat innocently.

"Certainly," answered the guide, looking at him resentfully.

"Oh, we heard of him at home. Which was his room here?"

"George Washington never lived here," said the guide disdainfully. "He laid the cornerstone of the original building on the eighteenth of Sep-

tember, 1793. That original structure was completed — ”

“ Hold on a moment,” said Joe. “ I paid the money and I ask the questions. Pat, you keep out. Don’t mind his foolish questions. Now we want to know this. We are strangers here. Was this building burned by our good British ancestors in the Revolutionary War? ”

“ Yes; that is, the original building was partially burned.”

“ Does the President live here? ”

“ No, young man. Have you never heard of the White House? ”

“ Yes, I believe I have.”

“ The President lives there. Here are the Legislative Halls, the Senate and the House of Representatives and also the Supreme Court.”

“ Oh, I see. But I read in history somewhere that Congress met in Philadelphia first.”

“ Yes, it did; but was removed to Washington in May, 1800. The entire effects of the government were conveyed here in three small sloops. There were only a hundred and forty officials and clerks then.”

“ Here, Joe, I want to ask one question. I’ll give a nickel for it.” And Pat tendered the money.

“ Go ahead, Pat.”

“ Could you point out some of the famous men about here? ”

"Congress is not in session," replied the guide, "so there are not many here."

"But I understand there is one always here, and I would like to see him."

"Well, if there is any particular one here, I can point him out. I know by sight every noted man who comes to this building. I learned that the first thing."

"There is only one I would like to see. I was told that he was here."

"Well, then, we can find him. Who is he?"

"Uncle Sam," replied Pat, looking anxiously at the guide.

"Young man, you are trying to fool me," asserted the frowning guide.

"Well, you are a guide, and we want to learn all we can."

By this time the others had gathered near, and the guide began to be uneasy. Mr. Sumner came to his rescue by directing the boys to gather on the east portico, and thus released him from further questions. The boys were instructed to arrange themselves on the portico step and here a photograph was taken. It was now nearly noon and time for lunch, so they retraced their steps over the terrace to the car and were soon in the cool restaurant.

After lunch, Tom and Joe asked permission to take a brief walk. The company was to be at ease

for half an hour and this request was readily granted. They were soon in Pennsylvania Avenue watching the crowds and looking in the store windows. Their uniforms, so familiar to Washington by their similarity to the regular United States Infantry uniform, attracted no attention whatever.

They were sauntering along, when Joe suddenly stopped short and seized Tom by the arm.

"Tom, look quick, there. See that man crossing the street. He's the book agent that took the coins."

"Sure as I'm alive; stop, he will turn and pass us. Slip into this store."

They bolted into a small shop, much surprising the clerk, and peered through the window.

The man they were watching did turn and pass the shop. He had a small valise in his hand.

"That's the same valise, Tom, and I saw the scar in his cheek. It's the agent."

"It certainly is. We must follow him. Ought we to have him arrested?"

"Not yet; we have no proof and we might get into trouble."

Cautiously they left the store and followed, about fifty feet behind the unsuspecting agent.

"What can we do, Tom?"

"We ought to find out what he is doing here."

"How?"

"By following him and watching."

"But we can't get off. We ought to be back in ten minutes."

"Of all luck! here comes John Kent."

John Kent was one of the camp followers, a civilian, but one of the party. He was taking a stroll before the next excursion. John was considerably older than the boys in the company. Tom hailed him.

"John, where are you going?"

"No place in particular; just walking."

"Turn back and go with us. Joe and I have something important on hand. We want to see Mr. Kinsman, but we can't go to him."

"Well, what can I do?"

"Twelfth Street is the next street. You hurry up to the restaurant and ask Mr. Kinsman to come here to the corner. I'll be here. Tell him to hurry. Joe, you follow the man; keep him in sight and I'll keep you in sight. John, you come back with Mr. Kinsman."

John hurried off. Tom halted at the corner of Twelfth Street. The agent was slowly walking along the avenue toward the Capitol, and Joe followed at a safe distance.

If the agent should turn, there would be trouble in following. Joe was now past the next corner and Mr. Kinsman would not come for several minutes. Tom was just feeling that his plan would

not work when Leo Inwood and Dick Brewer came along behind him.

"Hello, Tom, are you lost?"

"No, you life savers, but you are just in time. Joe has discovered the agent who took Mr. Miles' coins. Joe is following him, and I am here waiting for Mr. Kinsman." Tom spoke rapidly and with anxiety.

"Leo," he added, "you run along and keep track of Joe. He's nearly two blocks away now. If he turns from the avenue stay at the corner, but keep Joe in sight. Stay a block behind."

Leo started off, but still Mr. Kinsman did not come. Tom was very anxious. He knew he could trust Joe, but they all ought to be back in a few minutes. Leo was now in the second block, between Eleventh and Tenth, and Tom was forced to send out Dick.

"Dick, you follow and keep track of Leo. I wish I had more boys. This line is getting too long for comfort with so few of us. Don't lose Leo." But Dick was on his way and did not hear the injunction.

Tom was in despair and was about to decide that the whole pursuit was hopeless when Mr. Kinsman and John Kent came down Twelfth Street. He ran toward them and hurriedly explained to the warden what had happened. Mr. Kinsman acted promptly.

"Tom, you take John and follow up your line. Send each boy back except Joe. Tell them to say absolutely nothing. Then you and Joe and John keep on this man's trail until you find where he lives. John is in citizen's clothes. That may help you. Have you money?"

"Yes, sir. When shall we come back?"

"When you have done all you can. Send us a message at camp, if you can. You and Joe are able to take care of him. I would go with you if I could, but I can't leave the others."

As they talked, they were walking rapidly along the avenue. They spied Dick some distance ahead and Mr. Kinsman turned back.

"Good luck, Tom."

"Thank you, sir. We'll do our best."

They finally overtook Brewer.

"Leo is almost running," he exclaimed.

"Where is he?"

"Clear ahead."

"There he is," exclaimed Tom. "You go back, Dick, and say absolutely nothing to the others."

"Can't I go, too?"

"No; we can't use so many."

The disappointed Dick turned back, and Tom and John hurried on. They saw Leo halt at Seventh Street, and reached him as quickly as they could.

"They have turned," exclaimed Leo.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I caught a glimpse of Joe a minute ago."

Tom sent Leo back and with John hastened to join Joe. It was a long chase, as they did not want to attract attention by running. They decided to cross the street that they might see better. Near the Patent Office they overtook Joe, who was walking cautiously but rapidly, about one hundred feet behind the agent.

Tom and John slipped across the street and joined him.

"Gracious, I am glad to see you. I felt like a little dog trailing a bear. What about it?" he anxiously asked.

"Mr. Kinsman has given us permission to follow him and discover where he lives."

"Good. John, you cross the street and Tom and I will stay here. Don't lose sight of him for a moment. He may slip into some store or house."

"Trust me," said John.

The unsuspecting agent kept on his way and three self-appointed detectives, uncertain of their destination, continued to follow him.

In the meantime the company was assembled near the restaurant. Leo and Dick were in their places, but they spoke to no one of the incident. Mr. Kinsman explained that Tom and Joe had

been assigned to some special work and that stopped questions as to their absence.

The afternoon was spent at the navy yard where guns are made for the battleships. At the entrance they saw "Long Tom" the cast-iron gun made in 1786, which had such a varied career. It belonged originally to France, was captured by the English, sold to America, condemned and sold to Hayti, and there used against France. It finally reached America again.

It was with greatest interest that they inspected the guns, forty feet long and of 13-inch caliber. They watched the various processes, the boring of the immense steel tubes, and the fitting of the heated hoops and jackets. Mammoth traveling cranes picked up these guns and carried them as easily as a boy carries a baseball bat.

After a thorough examination of all parts of the shop, the company went on board the President's yacht, the *Dolphin*, which was lying at one of the docks. This was a special privilege which they had not expected. All agreed that a trip on the *Dolphin* would be a most delightful summer outing for the Young Crusaders.

As they left the vessel a party of tourists approached Mr. Jackson.

"What yacht are you from?" one of them asked.

"The *Dolphin*," he gravely replied.

No doubt the tourists went home and narrated how they had had a long conversation with an admiral of the United States Navy.

The tired company was glad to take a street car homeward. When they reached camp about five o'clock they were greeted by a group of guests. Mr. Hoyt and his entire party had arrived in Washington at noon and had found quarters at a boarding-house near the camp. Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt and their daughters and nieces had gathered in the yard near the tents, and were making lemonade for the boys. The rector and his family, Mrs. Marshall and Anna and several other friends had come to their assistance.

The company was dismissed and the group in the yard became at once the center of attraction. Mr. Sumner was soon in earnest conversation with Catherine Hoyt and Mr. Jackson with Marion. Pat, taking advantage of Joe's absence, was telling Elsie Seymour of their experiences, and in Tom's absence Art Miles found Louise Seymour a willing listener. The whole party made merry until dinner time. Mr. Kinsman was forced to withdraw from the group by the persistent appeals for another swim, so he took a party to the Potomac.

During the evening they had games and singing. Many inquiries were made for Tom and Joe, but to all was the same answer given: "They are on special duty."

When taps resounded over camp that night, every boy was ready to go to sleep. The day had been interesting but they were very tired. The guards were placed and the wardens sat by the headquarters' tent reviewing the day's events.

Suddenly the challenge rang out: "Who goes there?"

"Friend with the countersign," was the quiet reply.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"Columbia."

"Pass."

The sentinel withdrew his gun from its menacing position, and Tom and Joe with unconcealed eagerness hastened toward the wardens.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PURSUIT OF THE THIEF

THE wardens, sitting by their tent, were talking of the possible capture of the agent when Tom and Joe came into the yard. Their appearance was a great relief to the men, as they had been anxious about the safety of the boys.

"We're back," Tom reported.

"We are very glad. Sit down and tell us what has happened."

The boys found camp chairs and Tom began:

"We have had a chase. We followed that agent a mile. It was an unfamiliar part of the city to us, but we kept track of the streets, and Joe had his map. Finally the agent went into a boarding-house on K Street, beyond the Carnegie Library. We have the number."

"What did you do then?"

"We walked on and had a conference. John Kent noticed the sign 'Furnished Rooms for Rent' on the house and he suggested that we go and inquire about them and try to learn something of the people in the house. We decided that this was too

risky. Joe then suggested that John try to get a room in the house."

"But he had no baggage. That would look suspicious."

"We thought of that, so Joe went back to town and bought a cheap suitcase and a few necessary articles. John and I meantime watched the place. The agent did not come out. We had a hard time trying to appear not to loiter. When Joe came back, John went boldly to the house, agreeing to meet us in an hour near the Carnegie Library."

"You didn't stay on guard then?"

"We didn't dare to. We were afraid of attracting attention. We went to the library and John came there in an hour and reported that he had secured a room for three days, paying in advance. He said there were several other roomers. He did not see the agent, who was evidently in his room, but he found out that all would take supper together at six o'clock.

"We sat in the library for a while and talked it all over. Joe suggested a plan which we thought would work out."

"We are sure of that," said Mr. Jackson, smiling at Joe.

"It hasn't worked out yet, but it is started. This is the most interesting part of the whole day's work. John went back about five and planned to get acquainted with the agent at supper and have a talk

with him if possible. In the meantime I telephoned the rector here, asking him the number of his house. John took this address with him. John has become acquainted with the rector's daughter; that will help the plan."

"But what is the plan?"

"I am coming up to it, sir. We agreed to wait for John at a little hotel we found near by. We had supper there, and John turned up about an hour ago and told us his experiences."

"John is a good detective, evidently."

"Yes, sir. He said he sat near the agent at supper and began to speak of books. He managed to have a short talk in the parlor with him, and the agent invited him to his room. The agent said his name was Stillwell; and here's where the plan comes in."

"That's what we're waiting for, Tom."

"John asked Mr. Stillwell to see the books he was selling. The agent was very willing. After he had looked at them, John said that he knew a young lady that would be very much interested in them. They were a set of reproductions of famous paintings. He asked the agent if he would be willing to go to-morrow afternoon to the young lady's house and show her the books."

"And did Stillwell bite?"

"He did. He agreed to go and John gave him the address of the rector. That means that the

agent will call to-morrow at the rectory. After he had got his promise, John left and came out to tell us. He then went back to spend the night, so as not to arouse suspicion by not appearing at breakfast."

"But what's the plan from that point?"

"That's as far as we have gone with it. We want you to help us."

"Well, of all things! That's a great plan. You trap the victim into making a call. He sells a set of books and goes off so much the richer. He then disappears. The rector's daughter thinks John is a rascal to send an agent to her; John has spent three days' board money, and we are the gainers by a cheap valise. Joe, you are a second Napoleon." Mr. Sumner laughed heartily as he drew these conclusions.

Joe was somewhat embarrassed.

"I have thought it out differently, Mr. Sumner. I believe that the rector's daughter, Miss Giddings, can trap the man into making some admission. I am sure Louise Seymour could do it, if she were here."

"She is here, Joe."

"When did they come?" asked Tom eagerly.

"This afternoon."

"Is Elsie here, too?" It was Joe's question.

"Mr. Kinsman," asked Mr. Sumner, "was that Miss Elsie talking to Pat McGuire this evening?"

"I think so, and she seemed disturbed that so many members of the company were away on special service."

It was too dark to see what impression this made on Joe. He took up the thread of his plan again.

"Well, if Louise Seymour is here and Miss Catherine Hoyt, I believe they and Miss Giddings can manage to get some clue from that agent that will give us something to go on."

There was silence for a few minutes. The idea impressed the wardens, and they weighed it carefully in their minds.

"Boys," said Mr. Kinsman finally, "you go to bed. You have done very well and we shall try to help this plot to the very end. We shall talk it over a little and tell you our decision in the morning."

The tired boys went to their tents.

"They are a great pair," remarked Mr. Jackson. "That was a fine bit of work they did. I wonder how John Kent feels, sleeping away off in a lonely boarding-house and on the track of a thief."

"Oh, John Kent is all right. He is much older than our boys. He will enjoy it. But this is a serious business. If this Stillwell is guilty, we ought to get him. If he is not, we may get ourselves into trouble."

"We can't leave it to the girls. Why could not one of us be present?"

"It would be risky. He might recognize us. He may have been in Portage longer than we realize."

"Why not get Mr. Hoyt to help?"

"He's the very man. We must consult him in the morning. How will the rector feel about using his home in this way?"

"He won't mind. He is the right sort."

The wardens sat up late that night discussing the best course of action. They were not quite sure of their plans even when they went to get the few hours of rest that were possible before another day's work began.

The next morning the bugle seemed to arouse the camp only too early. The boys were now accustomed to the routine and they slept soundly. But breakfast would soon be waiting and an early start was advisable. By half-past nine they were again on their way, this time to the Congressional Library. On the street car Mr. Kinsman explained to Tom and Joe that Mr. Sumner had remained at the camp to arrange for the visit of the agent. He said that they might return to camp at noon, and be on the ground in the afternoon if they cared to do so. They had earned the privilege of seeing the affair to the end.

Content with this the boys began to enjoy the

wonderful beauty of the building which they were approaching.

As the company entered the Library of Congress and stood in the vestibule facing the central stair hall, a hush of awed wonder and amazement fell upon them. It seemed as if a great palace which hitherto had existed only in the imaginative portrayals of the Arabian Nights, had suddenly sprung up before them, constructed of actual marble, bronze and glass, made exquisitely beautiful by color and design and ornamented by the rarest examples of the painter's art.

It was impossible to grasp at once even the larger features of the vision of beauty before them, or to understand the relation of part to part. Slowly they began to feel and appreciate the magnificence of the great stairways, the graceful lightness of the upper arcades, the elaborate but harmonious decorations of sculpture and painting.

"This building as a whole," said Mr. Kinsman, "is said to be America's highest architectural achievement. The architects, painters and sculptors were all American citizens. America may well be proud of it."

"It must have cost oceans of money," suggested Miles.

"It cost over six million dollars. But it is a remarkable fact that it cost less than the sum appropriated by Congress for its construction."

"Has it any books, Mr. Kinsman?" asked Pat, "or is it like father's library at home. He calls the room where he reads the paper his library."

"Books, Pat! Miles of them. Come on quietly."

They went on into the great rotunda under the dome. Here they again gazed with wonder at the proportions and stately magnificence of this imposing place. A circular room, one hundred feet in diameter, was enclosed by the enormous piers which support the dome, and by tiers of arches and marble balustrades stretching between the piers. It was impressive by its size and ornamentation. Ranged in ever enlarged concentric circles about the great circular desk that stood in the center, were rows of reading tables for the use of the visitors to the library.

"Here is where you draw books," said Mr. Kinsman.

"Can any one get a book?" asked Barth.

"Yes, but it cannot be taken from the library."

"Where are the books?"

"In the stacks, which are directly off this room. The stacks are cast-iron frames supporting tiers of shelves. They rise nine stories to the roof. The library has one hundred miles of shelving and a capacity of nearly five million books. It possesses now between one and two million volumes."

"Could I get a book?" asked Pat.

"We'll try." Mr. Kinsman spoke to an attendant at the desk.

"You must write the name on this slip of paper, Pat," said Mr. Kinsman.

The others gathered close to watch Pat's experiment. Pat scratched his head, bit the pencil, and finally wrote down the name of a book, and the author. The attendant put the slip into a small receptacle and sent it on its journey through a pneumatic tube.

"The clerk in the stack gets this slip and finds the book," explained the attendant.

"Does he bring it?" asked Joe.

"No, indeed. He puts it into a receptacle which is carried by an endless chain to the desk. Here it is," and the attendant handed Pat the volume.

All crowded about to look at it. It was the volume of the history for which Pat had acted as agent.

"It did me a good turn once," explained Pat, "and now I can give it a ride in this little automobile."

"The books take longer journeys sometimes," said the attendant. "There is a tunnel from the Library to the Capitol. A carrier, consisting of an endless cable with two metal baskets, runs in this tunnel."

"The very thing for our tunnel to Mrs. Gilmour's," whispered Jimmie, nudging Tom.

"If a member of Congress wants a book, it is sent to him by means of this carrier. It takes four minutes for the carrier to make the journey."

"Can the President get a book in this way?" asked Pat.

"If he is at the Capitol," answered the attendant.

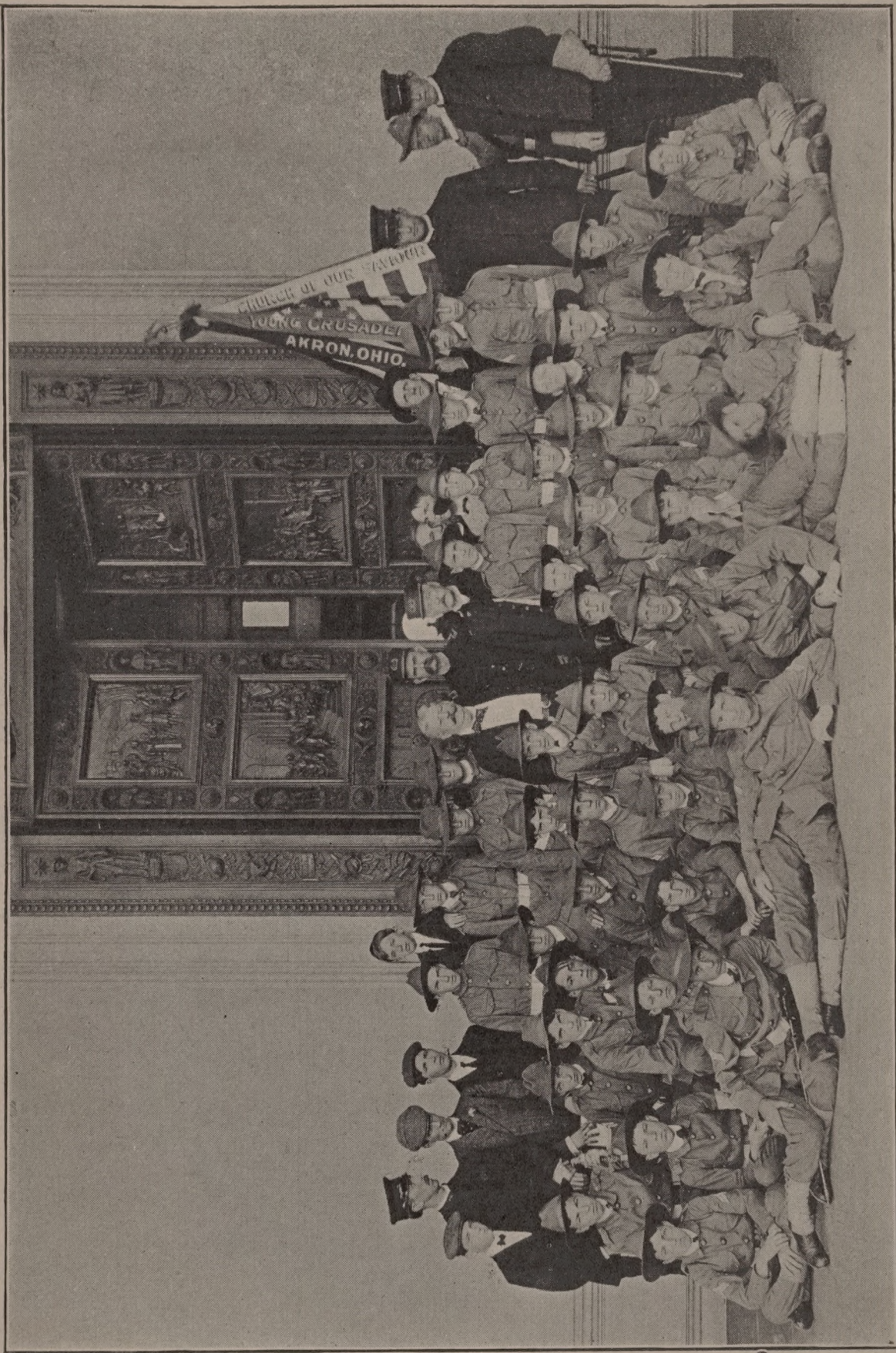
"Then, maybe, I'll give you a longer ride some day," said Pat to the volume, as he handed it back to the attendant.

After an inspection of the other parts of the library, with its vast collection of interesting historical documents and maps, they prepared to leave. They felt that the morning had been spent most profitably.

After lunch they went to the national cemetery at Arlington, where rest twenty thousand soldiers who died in the Civil War. The beautiful grounds are a fitting place for the long sleep of the nation's heroic dead.

The boys were impressed with the Temple of Fame, an open circular colonnade upon whose cornice are the names of our great generals. They saw the immense field of the dead, where the headstones stretch in orderly but apparently endless lines.

They became more interested in the house when they learned that it had been the home of General Robert E. Lee. At the opening of the war it had been seized by the government for a hospital. The



For the third time in their history were the great Rogers bronze doors closed.
See page 199.

view from the porch, which overlooks the splendor of Washington with its towering monument and brilliantly white buildings, is one of the finest in our land.

Before the house stood an iron flagpole supported by cables. Half-way up the staff was a little staging, which provided a foothold for a caretaker. This was reached by an iron ladder, which followed one of the supporting cables.

In order to get a better view, Jimmie Harding climbed the ladder and perched on the staging. Leo was about to follow when a local policeman spied him and ordered him to stop. The policeman did not see Jimmie seated aloft.

"You can't go up there," said the policeman. "It is against the regulations."

"All right," said Leo.

The policeman stood for a moment at the foot of the ladder to make sure that his command was understood and then started to walk away, much to Jimmie's relief. Pat saw the situation and realized that this was his chance to get even with Jimmie for causing him to remain awake on the train waiting for the porter. Pat hurried to the foot of the ladder and at the same time spoke to the policeman who was just making off.

"I beg your pardon," said Pat, "but could you tell me how old this house is?"

The policeman proved a ready talker, and Pat

kept him at the foot of the ladder for fifteen minutes. Jimmie was more and more uncomfortable. He disliked to come down and face the policeman, and he dreaded the laughter of the boys, watching the comedy from the porch, if he should be discovered.

"You take good care of those grounds," suggested Pat.

"Indeed we do," answered the policeman.

"I suppose you would make it very uncomfortable for a lawless person who broke the regulations?"

"He would be sent to a federal prison," said the policeman, thinking of thieves and marauders in general.

"He ought to be," asserted Pat in a loud voice.

Jimmie felt a desire to fall off the pole and land on Pat; but he clung on and kept his peace. Finally Pat felt sufficiently revenged and he cautiously led the policeman away a few feet and turned his attention to some remote object. His back was toward the pole. Pat made a slight motion for Jimmie to descend, and the latter lost no time in doing so. As he touched the ground and started toward the porch, Pat wheeled.

"Why, Jimmie, I didn't hear you come up. Have you been listening to our conversation?"

The policeman looked surprised at Jimmie's presence but said nothing.

“Now, run along, James,” said Pat, “and the next time you ask me to stay awake to wait for the porter, remember that every dog has his day,” and Pat laughed. Jimmie joined in the laughter, and the perplexed policeman went off, shaking his head over the foolish comments, which had no meaning for him. Jimmie was heartily invited by half a dozen boys to climb the pole again but he declined.

The company, after leaving Arlington, again took satisfaction in the welcome sight of their comfortable camp in Georgetown.

CHAPTER XVIII

A STRATAGEM

MR. SUMNER had a busy morning at the camp. He had a long talk with Mr. Hoyt and the rector, and enlisted their help and sought their advice. He then went over the whole matter with Miss Giddings, Catherine Hoyt and Louise Seymour, and they agreed to do what they could to help.

John Kent came into camp during the morning and reported. He had spent a comfortable night and was prepared to go back again if he was needed. He said the agent was surely planning to call at the rector's that afternoon at three o'clock. John said that he had told Stillwell that Miss Giddings would be notified of his purpose and of the fact that John had sent him. John was delighted to know that the plan arranged by the boys would be carried out.

Mr. Sumner then sent John off to join the company, so that he might not lose any more of the benefits of the visit. At five o'clock when all returned, the wardens would tell him if they wanted him to go again to the boarding-house.

[The scene of the conflict of wits was carefully

laid. All agreed that it was a delicate situation, and that Stillwell could easily be alarmed, and make a hasty retreat into obscurity.

Tom and Joe returned after dinner and the whole situation was arranged. Mr. Sumner, Tom and Joe, merely as interested listeners, were placed in the upper hall of the rectory, where they might hear every word. Catherine and Louise were to be in the parlor as visitors. Mr. Hoyt, as a visitor also, was to be busy at the rector's desk, in the room in the rear of the parlor. Miss Giddings was to be entertaining the guests. There was much joking and laughing as the party awaited the arrival of the agent. It was hard to believe that they were in serious pursuit of a thief.

It was a few minutes after three when the bell rang and the maid admitted the agent into the hall. Miss Giddings went out to him immediately.

"You are Mr. Stillwell. I have been expecting you. Mr. Kent said you would come. I have callers but shall be at liberty in a few minutes. Would you mind waiting?"

The agent bowed: "Not at all, madam."

Miss Giddings conducted him into the living-room, where Mr. Hoyt was busily writing.

"Mr. Hoyt, this is the gentleman of whom Mr. Kent spoke, Mr. Stillwell."

"How do you do, sir," said Mr. Hoyt. "Please be seated."

The agent felt the courtesy of his reception, so unusual in his experience. He sat in the seat indicated by Mr. Hoyt and they indulged in general conversation while Miss Giddings returned to her other guests.

In a few minutes she returned.

"Mr. Stillwell, I have told my friends of the purpose of your visit and they, too, would like to see your books."

The whole party gathered about the table on which the books lay. Stillwell was a shrewd man of thirty, with a nervous but restrained manner. He quietly opened the books and began to explain their contents. They were a set of reproductions of the famous masterpieces of art, both painting and sculpture.

"Here's Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs. Siddons," exclaimed Catherine. "I saw it in London two years ago."

"I enjoyed the Flemish School," said Miss Giddings. "There is a finish to their pictures that is fascinating. They depict every minute detail and their portrayal of fabrics and their absolute fidelity in reproducing the very texture of the smaller objects is remarkable. Take Van Dyck's 'Adoration of the Lamb' for example," and she turned to it. "It is exquisite."

"I got tired of paintings," declared Louise Seymour. "But I loved the sculptures and the old

furniture. I never got tired of the Wallace collection in London."

"Yes," spoke up Mr. Hoyt, "and I couldn't drag you from the Green Vault in Dresden. She wanted to buy every jewel and trinket in that room. She got so she could tell which was agate, or jasper, or onyx or lapis lazuli. That's more than I could do."

"But you know you liked some parts of it, Uncle."

"Yes, I did, but not the vases and the ivories or the caskets. You couldn't trade with them in this country. I liked the coins; they were money."

"Yes, Uncle," continued Louise, still turning the pages of the book she was examining, "and you wanted to see every one and we had to drag you away from them. And ever since then," and here she looked at Miss Giddings, "Uncle has been daffy about coins."

The agent gave a shrewd glance about the party. All were intent upon the photographs.

"Are you a collector of coins?" ventured the agent.

"No; never had time to fuss with them. Don't know anything about them. But it was interesting to see what the older peoples used as money."

"You like to collect good American coins, don't you, Uncle?" asked Louise.

"Oh, yes, the kind that pass in the stores. I never saw any other collection in this country. If I did I might get it, just to show you girls that I am interested in art." Mr. Hoyt turned away as he spoke.

"We people selling art books learn a good deal about other things, Mr. Hoyt," said the agent. "You would not have much trouble in getting a good collection. Have you tried the dealers or seen the catalogues?"

"Bless my heart, do they have dealers and catalogues in old coins just as they do for furniture? That shows how little a man knows about his own country."

Every one was silent. The girls were nervously turning the leaves of the books. The agent appeared to have lost interest in the explanation of their value and desirability. Up-stairs the three listeners were straining to catch every word.

"Yes, that business is organized, as all business is," answered Stillwell. "But one rarely gets anything of value from the dealers, as most of the rare coins are in private collections, or in museums. They are not on the market. I have a friend who has a few coins of value, a good start for a collection. He is going to Mexico for his health, and he has been trying to dispose of them. If you should care to see them, you might pick up some real values."

It was a moment of tension. A false move now would be fatal. Catherine realized this. She spoke at once.

"I don't care about your coins, father, but I should like these books. Do you think my allowance is sufficient?"

Mr. Hoyt smiled.

"I am not sure, Catherine, but perhaps it will hold out. Do you really want them?"

"Yes, indeed I do."

"This is your sample set, isn't it, Mr. Stillwell?"

"Yes, but I could deliver another set to-morrow."

"Well, the young lady is the judge. I haven't found Mr. Giddings at home this afternoon, and I shall be here again to-morrow afternoon about four. If you will deliver the books then, I shall pay you."

"Thank you, sir, I shall have them here." The agent then looked at Miss Giddings, as if asking her decision.

"I am grateful for the opportunity of seeing them, but I must consult my father. I shall let you know to-morrow."

"If your friend will send those coins, I might look at them," remarked Mr. Hoyt carelessly. "I should like to see a good American collection."

"I will try to have them here, Mr. Hoyt."

"Tell him to set his exact price on them. I am not a fellow to bargain. I'll know in twenty minutes if I want them. We can start a green vault then, can't we, Catherine? You can provide hand-painted china that you were unable to give away at Christmas. If I remember the temperature of that room correctly, we ought to start it in the refrigerator."

Mr. Hoyt kept up a running fire of comment as the agent strapped together his books and took his departure. The girls were almost panic-stricken with the result of their acting, and he feared to allow them opportunity to make any further comments.

An excited conference was held when Stillwell had gone. It resulted in a long distance telephone conversation with Mr. Miles urging him to come to Washington at once.

"Do you think he has the coins?" asked Louise of Tom, as they went back to the camp.

"I have no doubt of it. But we have no evidence yet."

"But he ought to be arrested."

"Not until he is actually found with them in his possession."

"What if he really has a friend who has a collection and is not the thief at all?"

"Then we are in for trouble, if he has any spunk."

All had agreed to stop discussion of the matter, as it would arouse suspicion. Others would easily become sensitive to any mystery, and publicity would be disastrous.

John Kent was sent back to the boarding-house that night for supper, with instructions to avoid any unnecessary discussion with the agent, after he had taken sufficient interest in the result of the visit to Miss Giddings.

Preparations had been made for a reception in the evening. The wardens had sent out invitations to a number of friends in Washington, and the word had been spread among the neighbors in Georgetown. As the wardens were dressing for the reception, the officer of the day came to them and reported that there was a visitor in the parlor. Mr. Jackson was sent to receive him. He was surprised upon entering the parlor to find a gentleman dressed in the uniform of Colonial days, knee breeches, a long coat with the skirts turned back and with a three-cornered hat in his hand. Mr. Jackson cordially greeted the visitor, who explained that he was a neighbor who had come to pay his respects to the officers of the company. The other men soon arrived. The guest explained that he was on his way to a meeting of an organization formed to keep alive the customs and traditions of the continental minutemen, those brave defenders of the rights of the colonies, who were ready to

take the field at a minute's notice. After a visit that was only too short, the guest left. The wardens later returned the visit and were welcomed in a hospitable home.

The reception brought many visitors to the camp, and both the house and yard were filled with people enjoying the hospitality of the Young Crusaders.

Dick Brewer, Leo Inwood and Jimmie Harding slipped away from the others about half-past eight, and met in the deserted kitchen.

"Have you got it, Leo?" asked Dick.

"Yes, there it is," answered Leo, opening a closet door and disclosing about fifty feet of hose neatly rolled on the floor.

"Where's the pole?"

"In the tent. I have tied an old shirt to it."

Dick seized the hose and together they dragged it quietly up the back stairs to the sleeping quarters.

"Which is Pat's cot?"

"Right there by the door."

Leo deftly slipped the end of the hose under the mattress at the very edge, so that it was directly beneath the side of the pillow. They then stretched the hose through the door, along the baseboard of the hall, down the back stairs and through a window of the kitchen and into Dick's tent. Gathering a few stray garments they concealed such por-

tions of the hose as were visible and then joined the others.

After the visitors were gone, Joe blew Taps and the tired boys were only too glad to go to bed.

Pat, resting on his pillow, suddenly heard the muffled word: "Pat."

"Did you speak, Leo?" he asked of Inwood in the next cot.

"No, Pat. Go to sleep."

"I must have imagined it."

Just as he settled down he heard a voice again, speaking very solemnly.

"Pat, are you alive?"

"Great spooks, Leo, what are you talking about?" said Pat, in a startled whisper.

"I didn't say anything," muttered Leo, and he buried his face in the bedclothes to suppress his laughter.

"I must have eaten too much cake," said Pat.

After a few minutes another solemn question came to Pat's ears.

"Pat, can't you see me hovering over you?"

Pat started up.

"What are you fellows doing?" he shouted.

At this moment Mr. Sumner appeared at the door and threw the light from an electric candle over the room.

"You must keep quiet in here," he warned them.

"They are trying to scare me," explained Pat.

"Who's up to mischief?" asked Mr. Sumner.

By this time all the boys were awake and asking what was the matter.

"You were dreaming, Pat," continued Mr. Sumner. "Go to sleep."

"All right, sir, but would you mind throwing the light on the ceiling over my cot?"

The circle of light revealed nothing and Pat settled down again. All was quiet and Pat was beginning to feel drowsy, when he heard again the mysterious voice.

"Pat, I am waving at the window."

Pat cast a hasty glance at the open window. There, moving back and forth, was a flimsy white object. Pat's red hair began to rise. He was too startled to speak.

"Pat," came the voice again, "if you speak one word, I shall come in and carry you off."

The boy was silent. Great beads of perspiration began to gather on his forehead. The white object was still moving to and fro.

"Pat, get up and dress and come down into the yard."

Pat got out of bed slowly. He heard a stifled sound from Leo's bed. Realizing that Leo was awake, Pat took courage as he stood upon the floor.

"Never a step I'll move," shouted Pat, shaking his fist at the window and going over to Leo. As

he was attempting to pull the blankets from Leo, Mr. Sumner again appeared.

"What does this mean?" he asked sternly.

"Mr. Sumner," said Pat, "some one is trying to fool me. Look at the window."

But the object was gone. Pat felt foolish. "I am hearing funny voices."

As he spoke there came another warning: "Pat, your end has come!"

Mr. Sumner heard the voice and realized that no one in the room had spoken.

"Pat, I'll have you in just one minute," came the voice.

Mr. Sumner threw his light under the cot, but there was no one there.

"Thirty seconds, Pat. Be ready."

Mr. Sumner began to move the cot. In so doing he disturbed the hose, which fell to the floor with a thud.

"There are your voices, Pat."

At the same moment there was a shuffling sound from the direction of the kitchen. The warden hastily went to the stairs and followed the hose. He found the other end in the kitchen, but no boys. A hurried examination of the tents showed every boy in place, and all apparently asleep. He returned to the house. Pat was sitting on his cot.

"Well, Pat," said Mr. Sumner quietly, "your ghosts wear our uniforms, evidently."

“Yes, sir,” said Pat, “but I never want to hear a voice again that you can’t answer back, if you don’t like what it says.”

Twenty minutes later Leo slipped from the house and reported the results of their experiment to four laughing boys in the tent.

CHAPTER XIX

MOUNT VERNON: CLOSING UPON THE THIEF

EARLY on Wednesday morning the company prepared for its pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, the home and the burial place of George Washington. No ancient shrine of mediæval saint was ever visited with more reverence and loyalty than this beautiful spot, saved forever for the nation by the efforts of a band of women.

The trip down the Potomac was made on the steamer *Macalester*. The day was warm but delightful. The wardens on the boat told the boys of the home life of Washington upon his estate, and prepared them for the charm of the imposing country house, filled with the relics of our first President.

The tomb was first visited. With bared heads the Young Crusaders stood before the plain brick structure within which lie the mortal remains of George and Martha Washington. The aged colored guide, in solemn tones, related the simple facts and pointed out the objects of interest.

The company then went through the beautiful

grounds to the house. They inspected with interest the outlying buildings of the Virginia farm of colonial days, and then reverently went through the house itself. Furnished as it is with many of the original possessions of General Washington, and with objects of greatest interest to patriotic Americans, the house became to them a place of intense interest and aroused the deepest emotions. They stood silent in the room in which Washington died, and examined with awe the open Bible, the mahogany table and the haircloth coach chest, those objects upon which his eyes last rested.

As the members of the party rested upon the great piazza or strolled about the grounds, Mr. Sumner joined Miss Catherine Hoyt.

"This is a delightful spot, Miss Catherine."

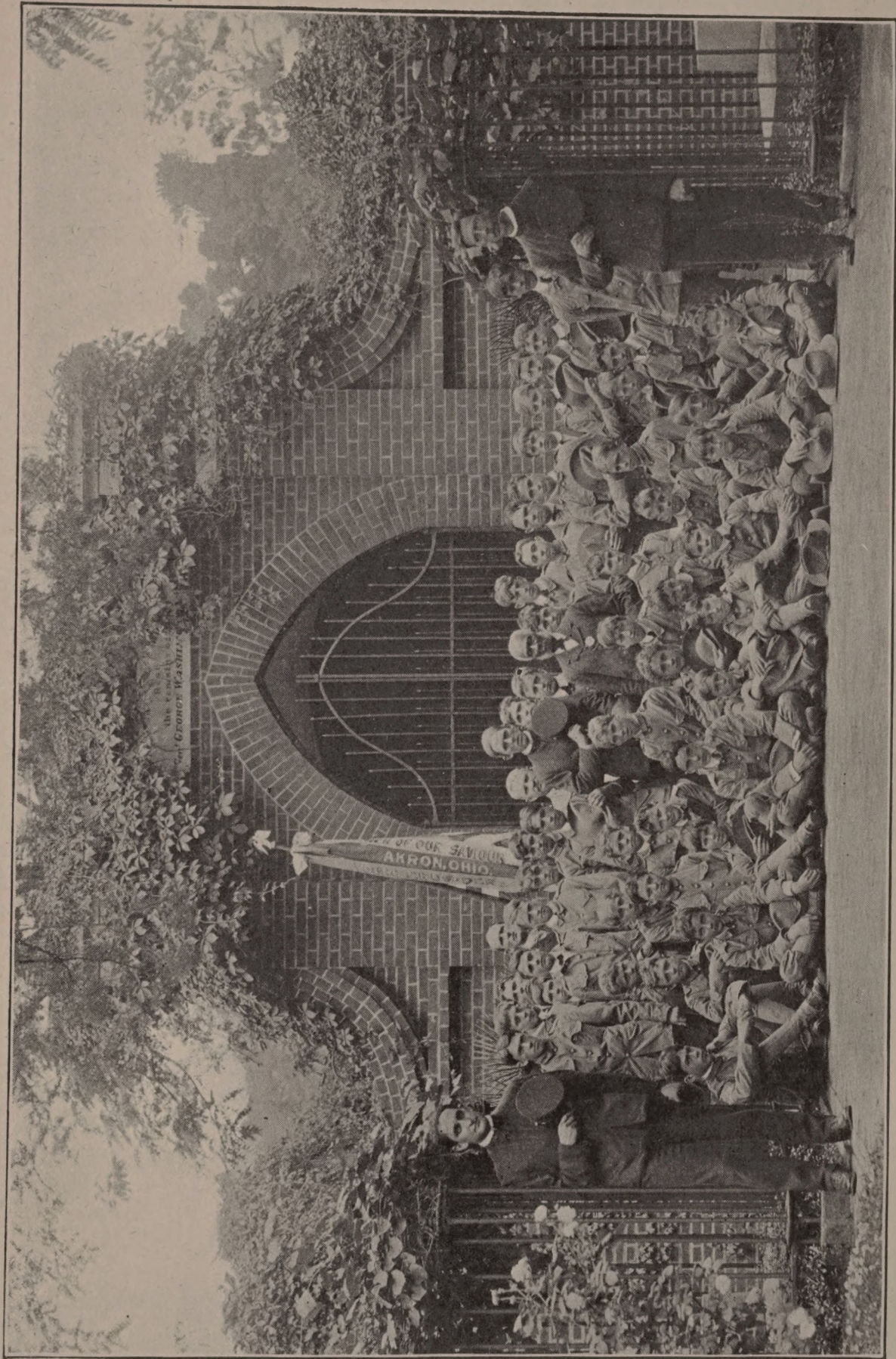
"It is, indeed. I feel reluctant to leave it. What a wonderful experience this is for the boys."

"For all of us. And the presence of Mr. Hoyt and all his household has added to our pleasure. It is rather wearing to have the care of so many boys all the time, and it is a relief to have other friends here."

"We are glad to be here, especially at this time. Will you be able to see all the important things in Washington?"

"We hope so."

"Have you been to the Corcoran Gallery, Mr. Sumner?"



With bared heads the Young Crusaders stood before the plain brick structure.

"Not yet. It may be that we cannot get there. The days are passing rapidly and there is a great deal to do."

"Marion and I were talking of the Corcoran Gallery this morning. Mr. Jackson has promised to take her if he can get away from the company long enough."

"If Mr. Jackson can get away, I think I could, too. May I try to arrange to take you, Miss Catherine?"

"I should be glad to go."

"Then I shall send word some morning when I can manage it. Would you be willing to meet me there? I may not have sufficient time to call for you."

"Certainly, I shall be very glad."

"I must go now. I am to take Tom and Joe back to Washington by street car, so we may be present this afternoon when the agent calls. I am sorry to leave."

"Good luck to you, Mr. Sumner."

A few of the boys had strolled again to the tomb and engaged the venerable guide in conversation. He showed them the interesting trees planted near the tomb by distinguished visitors.

"The Prince of Wales, now King Edward the Seventh, during his visit to Mount Vernon in 1860, planted a tree which died. This oak was planted at his request to replace the other. This linden

was planted by Prince Henry of Prussia in 1902."

"This tree," he pointed to a magnolia, "was planted by General Washington himself before he died. This leaf," picking one from the ground, "has fallen from the tree, and I take pleasure in presenting it to you" — turning to Pat — "that you may have a keepsake from the very tree planted by General Washington's own hands."

Pat took the leaf and examined it. The guide looked at him, trying to convey the impression that the transaction was not complete.

"You ought to tip him, Pat," whispered Joe.

"Not much," asserted Pat.

"I am sorry," continued the guide, "not to be able to give one to each of you, especially as I am unable to determine who appreciates it most."

"I am sorry, too," said Tom. "I would give a quarter for one."

The guide reached into his pocket and produced another leaf.

"I have one here I was reserving. But you may have it, young man."

Tom took the leaf and reluctantly paid the quarter. The boys quietly laughed at him.

"Are you sure it is genuine?" asked Tom, slightly ruffled.

"Young man, I am seventy-three years old, and

a minister of the Gospel. I have told the truth for fifty years."

"What did you do the other twenty-three years?" asked Tom.

But the guide refused to answer.

Mr. Sumner then came and, summoning Tom and Joe, went off to take the car back to Washington. The company left by the boat, and enjoyed again the pleasant views along the Potomac. Mr. Jackson was seated with Marion Hoyt and Louise Seymour upon the deck.

"You really think you can get off to take me to the Corcoran Gallery?"

"I am sure of it. But I cannot set the exact time now. I shall send you word the first minute I can arrange it."

Upon reaching Washington the party went to Smithsonian Institution and saw the great collection of American antiquities as well as the thousands of birds and fishes.

After leaving the Smithsonian they went to the National Museum and spent the remainder of the afternoon examining the collections there, which number over six million specimens. They were impressed by the magnitude and extent of the museum and its treasures.

"My head is all in a whirl," exclaimed Pat, as they left. "I didn't know there were so many different kinds of things in the world. My grand-

father had fourteen children and he said he had a hard time finding names for them all. What a job he would have had naming all those things in there. Who named them all, Mr. Kinsman?"

"No one man, Pat. Their names come naturally, by growth and necessity, like the words of a language."

"Oh, I thought Noah Webster made those up. His name is on the book. I guess I have a lot to learn, yet."

"You have indeed, Pat," laughed the warden.

Upon their arrival at camp there came the usual demand for a swim and Mr. Jackson set out with the party.

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Mr. Miles had arrived in Washington at noon, greatly pleased at the prospect of recovering his coins. Mr. Hoyt met him at the station, and together they laid the matter before Major Frederick, who advised them to make absolutely certain of the coins before taking any steps against Stillwell or even notifying the police.

"Use every possible means to secure the coins and identify them without arousing suspicion, and then arrest the agent," urged the major.

They agreed to this, and it was decided that Mr. Hoyt receive Stillwell alone. Mr. Miles would be in the house and Mr. Sumner, as well, when the agent called. They would have no difficulty in

detaining him long enough to call the police, if they cared to do so.

Mr. Sumner left the company about three o'clock and with Tom and Joe went to the rectory. The boys were unwilling to miss the agent's visit. John Kent was to report at five as usual, to learn what he should do during the evening.

Promptly at four Stillwell mounted the steps of the rectory.

Mr. Hoyt was waiting. "So you have the books."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that will please the young ladies. Here is the money. Please make out a receipt."

Stillwell did as Mr. Hoyt requested.

"Do you still wish to see the coins, Mr. Hoyt?"

"Oh, to be sure. Say, I wonder how much of my enthusiasm for coins came from a desire to tease the girls? We will see. I have a few minutes and if you have brought them, I shall be glad to look."

"My friend could not come," said the agent cautiously. "So I brought them for him."

He took a chamois bag from his pocket and carefully withdrew one coin. It was wrapped in tissue paper. Mr. Hoyt looked at it.

"It's a pine-tree shilling," said the agent.

"Let's see them all spread out," requested Mr. Hoyt. "That's what makes a collection. They

ought to match, or make a design or something. The gondoliers in Venice make very pretty designs by tacking bad coins given to them as tips, upon the upright wall of the forward end of the pit of the gondola. Let's make a design upon this atlas."

Somewhat reluctantly the agent unwrapped them and spread them out. They were in good condition and the unusual designs were attractive.

"Mrs. Giddings is up-stairs. May I show them to her?" Mr. Hoyt picked up the atlas as he spoke.

"Certainly."

Up the stairs Mr. Hoyt carried the coins and into the rector's study. At the same moment Miss Giddings appeared from the dining-room and engaged the agent in conversation.

Mrs. Giddings and Mr. Miles had been eagerly awaiting Mr. Hoyt's arrival with the coins. As soon as the door was closed, Mr. Miles gave them one long searching look.

"They are mine," he exclaimed. "But not one of the valuable coins is here, except this pine-tree shilling. There ought to be six more," he added, after counting them. "These are interesting but not especially rare. But we have the man and now we can get the others. Shall I telephone the police?"

"Just a moment, Mr. Miles," said Mr. Hoyt. "That may spoil our chance of getting the rest.

Would you rather punish the man or get the other coins? ”

“ I want to do both.”

“ Suppose I agree to take these and then we will try to have him offer the others.”

“ If you think best. I’ll wait to see what develops. We can arrest him at the boarding-house, if necessary.”

“ Very well. I shall go down and learn what I can.”

The agent was nervous when Mr. Hoyt descended, but Mr. Hoyt’s manner was very reassuring.

“ This seems a very interesting collection, Mr. Stillwell. What is your friend’s price for it? ”

“ There are no very rare coins in it, Mr. Hoyt, but they are in good condition and some are still currency. My friend wants sixty dollars for them.”

“ Sixty dollars. Why, I am getting off easy. Really, Mr. Stillwell, I thought I was getting some rare coins. It hardly seems worth while to get such a cheap collection.”

“ My friend has several rare coins that he has retained.”

“ That’s better,” exclaimed Mr. Hoyt. “ Now if he would be willing to sell a few rare ones I might consider it. Could you bring them to me? ”

“ Yes, I think so. But they are worth several hundred dollars.”

"Oh, that's all right. I find my friend up-stairs has quite a knowledge of coin values. Could you come this evening? I shall be here then."

"Yes, sir."

The agent carefully wrapped the coins again and put them in the chamois bag. As he left he said:

"I shall be back at eight o'clock with the other coins if my friend is willing to sell them."

Mr. Miles was elated over the result of the stratagem. They telephoned at once to Major Frederick, who said he would come to the rectory with a detective. Once the valuable coins were in the house, it would be safe to arrest Stillwell.

When John Kent arrived at camp, Mr. Sumner told him of the progress made toward the recovery of the coins and of the intention of Stillwell to visit the rectory again that evening. John was to go again to the boarding-house for dinner and to keep close watch over Stillwell. If the agent showed any signs of doing anything else than to make the call, then John was to telephone to the rectory, where they would be waiting.

"Now, John," said Mr. Sumner, "we are at the very crisis of this affair and we must not fail. We are depending on you to keep your eyes open, and to never allow Stillwell out of your sight from supper to the time he enters the rectory."

"Very well, sir. I shall do my best."

"I know it, John."

John then started for the boarding-house. He was a reliable young man, with good sense. As he was older than the boys in the company, the wardens had no reluctance in permitting him to do this service alone, even in the remote section of the city.

Tom and Joe had borrowed some citizen's clothes, Joe from the rector's son, whom they found a delightful comrade, and Tom from one of the camp followers who had been lucky enough to have an extra suit. Realizing that in citizen's dress they might take a stroll after supper with certain members of Mr. Hoyt's party without being too conspicuous, they refrained from the usual swimming expedition and donned their borrowed clothes.

The camp prepared to enjoy the evening as usual. Miss Frances Giddings, the rector's younger daughter, had prepared a treat for the company and had promised to bring it during the evening, with several of her friends. Mrs. Giddings was to accompany the young ladies and the boys looked forward with eagerness to their coming, for the Georgetown friends had charmed the whole company by their courtesy and attractiveness.

Little did the crowd of merry-makers, gathered about the tents that delightful June evening, real-

ize the anxious efforts then being made that would, if successful, free their comrade, Ed Ross, from the burden that was on his heart, the feeling that some shadow of suspicion rested on his father.

CHAPTER XX

THE CHASE AND THE CAPTURE

JOHN KENT took the street car into the city, and after transferring reached the boarding-house on K Street shortly before six. As he opened the door he encountered Stillwell, who had entered but a moment before.

"Good evening, Mr. Stillwell. Have you had a good day?"

"Yes, first rate. I sold a set of books. How about you?"

"Oh, I haven't a job yet, but I am looking around."

They went together to supper. Kent noticed that Stillwell seemed preoccupied, and somewhat nervous. After supper, when Stillwell started to his room, John followed along in a casual way.

"I'd like another look at those books, Mr. Stillwell, if you don't mind. They are very interesting."

"Certainly. But I am busy and you will excuse me if I keep right on with my work. I must go out again this evening."

He busied himself while John examined the books again. John noticed him transfer a small packet from his trunk to his pocket. They were interrupted by the landlady tapping on the door.

"Mr. Stillwell is wanted at the telephone."

The telephone was in the lower hall. When the agent went down-stairs, John tiptoed to the banister and listened. Mr. Stillwell spoke in whispers, but John was able to catch most of his words.

"Yes, this is Stillwell."

"What band of boys?"

"No, I haven't noticed them."

"From where? Portwick? What about it?"

"Oh! Portage! I have it now."

"No, I haven't had a chance to read the evening paper."

"Others in the party, too?"

"What names?"

"Say that name again."

"Why, that's the man! What do you think?"

"I guess it's all up. I'll leave to-night."

"Stanton Square at 8.15. All right."

John hurried in and when Stillwell entered he was looking intently at the reproduction of the Sistine Madonna.

"This is a great picture," he remarked.

"I am called out of town, Kent, and must pack up. I know you will excuse me. I am going to Savannah by way of Richmond."

"Well, I am sorry, Mr. Stillwell. I hope I'll have a job when you get back. I don't want to bother you, so I shall go. Good-by."

John left and went down-stairs. Stillwell's door was open, and John hardly knew what to do. He realized that Stillwell had had a message from some confederate, who had warned him of the presence of the Portage visitors. The agent had taken alarm.

Did he suspect John? John had sent him to the rectory. If he did, then while John left the house to telephone, the agent would probably take his departure with the coins. John decided to risk the telephone in the lower hall. But he must be very careful. The agent could probably hear him. If he whispered it would only excite suspicion. After a few minutes' deliberation he decided upon a method.

He looked up Major Frederick's office number in the telephone book. He knew that the office would be deserted, but he took down the receiver and gave the number. He then pretended that some one answered, and said in a fairly loud voice:

"Is this the — Theater? Any seats left? Sure I can get them? John Kent. Save four."

He then rang off and actually called the rectory. Mr. Sumner answered the telephone. John recognized his voice and knew that his message would be understood and his familiarity pardoned.

"Hello, old chap. This is Kent. Want to go to the theater? My treat. Bring a couple of the boys and come right over. I'll be ready. Hurry along or we'll be late. Good-by." John then got his hat and waited.

.
Mr. Sumner at the rectory received the message, and with a brief "All right, we'll be there," hastily turned to the waiting group.

"Kent has just telephoned asking some of us to go over there to go to the theater. That means that he needs help. Either the agent is not coming here, or is making trouble for John. At any rate we must go."

It was just half-past seven and the detective had not arrived. Mr. Hoyt jumped up.

"My machine is at the garage. I'll get it and take you over. Who's to go?"

There was silence. That every one wanted to go was apparent. The look of appeal on the faces of Joe and Tom was irresistible.

"I'll take Warren and Russell," said Mr. Sumner briefly. "We shall be able to do all that is necessary, I believe."

If the two boys had never before felt rewarded for their loyalty they felt it at that moment.

"The rest might wait here for emergencies. Keep the detective. We do not know what the result of this may be. We shall telephone."

They were soon in the automobile and Mr. Hoyt was risking arrest by speeding toward their destination.

John was very restless as he waited in the parlor of the boarding-house and he finally decided to go out on the stone steps. He could there note either the approach of the boys or the departure of the agent.

He had not long to wait. In a few minutes the agent came running down the stairs with a valise in his hands. He went directly out of the front door and with a careless nod to John started along K Street.

Here was a predicament. If John followed the agent, the boys would not find him. If he waited he would lose track of the agent. He must leave a message with the landlady.

He ran into the house and wrote simply the

words "Stanton Square. Follow," upon a sheet of paper. This he requested the landlady to hand to any one who inquired for him.

John hurried after the agent. He was still in sight, but a moment later he turned into North Capitol Street. John then ran and as he turned the corner again saw his man; he now had no difficulty in keeping Stillwell in sight. He turned at Massachusetts Avenue and went on directly to Stanton Square. It was now getting darker and John drew nearer.

Stillwell walked slowly about the square evidently searching for his confederate. John never lost sight of him. It was several minutes before he saw another man join the agent. They held a short conference, and there was evidently a difference of opinion as to what to do. At last the stranger seemed to prevail, and they started off along Sixth Street.

At this moment the big automobile swung into the square from Massachusetts Avenue.

"Get out, boys, and scour the place for John," said Mr. Sumner. "Meet at the machine. Look sharp. You go this way and I'll go the other. If we are wanted, give three blasts on the horn, Mr. Hoyt."

Tom and Joe on the north side of the square reached the corner of Sixth Street before they spied John. They ran to him.

"There he goes," said John excitedly. "He has the coins in his valise."

"You go back to the machine, John," said Joe hastily. "Tell them to follow. Tom, you stay here at the corner and keep me in sight. I'll follow the agent."

John ran back and asked Mr. Hoyt to follow the boys. Mr. Hoyt blew the horn three times and Mr. Sumner came running to the machine. They got in and Mr. Hoyt started up.

"Right up to the farther corner," said John.

Mr. Hoyt speeded up and had just about reached the corner, when a policeman stepped up.

"Stop."

Mr. Hoyt stopped.

"You are exceeding the speed limit and you are under arrest."

"But it is a very urgent call, officer. We are following some thieves."

"I've heard that before. You must come to headquarters."

"But need we go, officer?" asked Mr. Sumner. The officer looked at him doubtfully.

"No, I guess not. But you must go," — this to Mr. Hoyt.

"I am sorry, Mr. Hoyt," said Mr. Sumner, "but there goes Tom, running, and we must follow. Don't worry about us. Tell the story and that will free you."

With this Mr. Sumner and John ran after Tom, who was now lost to their sight.

In the meantime, Joe had taken up the trail. He was aroused to the spirit of the chase and could scarcely restrain his impulse to tackle the agent, seize his valise and run. But prudence prevailed. He drew nearer, and glanced back to see if Tom were following, but he could not see him.

After walking three blocks, the men suddenly turned into a house. There was a moment's delay, as they were having difficulty in unlocking the door. Joe approached quietly; he now heard running footsteps behind him and he knew that Tom was close at hand. Still the door would not open. The footsteps were very plain. Joe was right in front of the house now, and knew that he must pass on in order not to attract attention. Just then the door opened and the men stepped into the house.

Joe carefully noted the house and then turned to meet Tom, who was now close at hand.

"Tom, they have gone into that house," whispered Joe excitedly.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I was right in front of the house when they entered."

"The automobile ought to be here."

"Here come Mr. Sumner and John," exclaimed Joe, as he caught sight of the pair who were running toward them.

“Mr. Sumner,” he added, as they came up, “the thieves have gone into that house. What shall we do?”

Mr. Sumner stood silently looking at the house. He was too concerned to explain the absence of the automobile.

“We must telephone for help. Tom, you go to that drug store near the square and telephone the rectory. Tell them to come and bring the detective. We shall watch the house.”

Tom ran off on his errand. Mr. Sumner, Joe and John Kent went to the shadow of the porch across the street and watched. Joe noted the lights. The men were evidently moving from room to room. He noticed a light in the attic window for a short time. Then all became dark, except the first story.

Tom returned shortly and reported that help would soon arrive. Major Frederick would bring all the men in his automobile.

The wait was long and nerve racking. They talked but little. Finally they saw a machine coming slowly along Sixth Street. Mr. Sumner hastened from the shadow and intercepted it. Major Frederick was at the wheel, and in it were the other wardens, the detective and Mr. Miles. Mr. Sumner hastily explained the situation.

“Mr. Hoyt telephoned just after we got Tom’s message,” explained the major. “He was released

at once at the station. We told him to join us here with two officers. There he is now."

Another machine was seen to be approaching. It drew up and they saw that it contained beside Mr. Hoyt one man in citizen's clothes and two officers.

"I have brought a detective with a search warrant," said Mr. Hoyt, in a low voice.

"Then we shall enter the house at once," exclaimed the first detective. "But first let us get our bearings." Beckoning to the second detective they walked a short distance away from the others, and stopped directly opposite the house. Joe, hiding in the shadow of the porch, had not relaxed his vigilance. Tom and John were with the others. The detective stopped so near to him that he overheard their conversation.

"I understand there is a reward of one hundred dollars for the recovery of the coins."

"Yes," answered the first detective.

"Then we must be sure to find them ourselves."

"By all means."

They passed across the street and motioned to the policemen.

"I shall enter the house first," said the detective. "Let the others follow." Turning to Mr. Sumner, he said: "Have Mr. Miles come with us, but tell the others to drive the machines a block away.

They will soon attract attention. We must avoid this. You come in, too, Mr. Sumner."

The detective mounted the steps and rang the bell. The door was opened by Stillwell. The detective stepped in, saying quietly:

"I wish to see you a moment."

Stillwell looked startled. The second detective followed at once and stepping into the parlor confronted Stillwell's confederate, whose name, as they learned later, was Grant.

"What do you want?" asked Grant angrily.

"We want to talk with you a moment."

By this time the two policemen were in the hall, with Mr. Sumner and Mr. Miles. Joe and Tom had pushed in, too.

"We have a warrant," said the detective, "and we are going to search this house."

Grant and Stillwell protested, but in vain. The detective instructed the two policemen to take charge of them and on no account to allow them to leave the room. He seemed somewhat disturbed when he saw the boys in the house, but he acted at once.

"Mr. Miles, will you and Mr. Sumner watch the front door? Blair," he said, turning to the second detective, "you and this young man" — indicating Joe — "search the second floor. I shall take this other lad with me."

It came over Joe in a flash that the purpose of

the detectives was to permit no one to search but themselves. They wanted to get the reward.

Joe obediently followed the detective to the second floor. At the head of the stairs the detective turned to him.

“I shall light every light on this floor. You remain at the head of the stairs to call me if I am needed below.”

Joe was now sure of the detective's intention, but took his post and began to study his surroundings. He stood by a door which opened into the bathroom. A gas light was burning in this room. Joe glanced in, his eyes searching every corner, eager for a sight of the valise. But it was not to be seen.

For ten minutes the search went on unsuccessfully. Joe glanced again into the bathroom. Looking toward the ceiling, he noticed a hatch. Suddenly he remembered the light he had seen in the attic window. Joe stepped into the room. Quickly he placed a chair and climbed to the top of a dresser. Here he could reach the hatch. He moved it. A stream of light from a street lamp shining into the attic gave him confidence. He reached up and, placing his hands upon the side of the hatchway, drew himself up until he could see into the attic. It was small and there was no one there. Joe rested his feet again upon the dresser, and with a bound was able to pull himself up through the opening.

He found himself in a small, low attic, practically empty. Joe put the cover over the opening through which he had entered that the detective might not discover where he had gone, lighted the single gas jet, and began to search. At first it seemed useless. There was apparently no place where a valise could be concealed. Glancing up, he saw that a board had been placed across the open rafters. Upon the board in the darkest corner was a small object. Joe reached up and seized it. It was the valise!

Joe, now breathing hard, opened it. Within, among a few articles of clothing, was a chamois bag. Joe felt it; it contained the coins.

The boy could hardly refrain from shouting. But he realized that he must put the coins in Mr. Miles' hands, before the detective had a chance to interfere. Putting the bag into his pocket he went to the hatch, but as he was about to lift it he heard voices in the bathroom. The two detectives were talking together.

"I have looked everywhere on the first story."

"And I have gone over this floor," said Blair, "and I cannot find a sign of a valise."

"Let's try once more. Suppose we search together here."

"All right," replied Blair. "What's become of that boy. I placed him at the head of the stairs."

"I haven't seen him. He's about somewhere."

"Well, I'll search this room."

Joe knew that he meant the room immediately adjoining the bathroom. The door had been closed, but Joe heard the detective open it. If he attempted to descend he would certainly be seen.

Joe was perplexed. He did not want to be detected just as he was to have the satisfaction of restoring the coins. He stood for a minute in thought. An idea came to him with such suddenness that he almost shouted. He took his knife from his pocket and began to tap upon the gas pipe.

In the meantime Tom was roaming about on the first floor. Suddenly he heard a little click which sounded as if it came from the chandelier. He listened. Two clicks came in succession, then after a moment two more.

"That sounds like our wireless," was Tom's thought.

"That's 2 — T," he said to himself. "That's my call. Joe is signaling."

He took a coin from his pocket and reaching up tapped three times on the chandelier. Three clicks sounded in response. Tom waited and listened. The clicks came now sharply.

121 — 21 — 1221 — 12 — "Come."

2 — 21 — "to."

2112 — 22 — 2 — 122 — 211 — 21 — 21 — 1221 — "bathroom."

Tom tapped three times and then hurried upstairs. He entered the bathroom and glanced about there, then closed both doors. In a moment he saw the hatch cover move.

"Joe," he whispered.

"Yes. Wait a minute," came the voice from above.

The cover was now removed and Joe's face appeared. Putting his finger to his lips he silently held out the chamois bag, making a motion as if to drop it.

Tom stood beneath and Joe dropped it into his outstretched hands.

"Take it to Mr. Miles, quick," said Joe.

Tom waited to hear no more. As he left the room by the hall door, the detective entered from the bedroom, but Tom did not stop. The detective caught sight of Joe, who was peering down from above.

"Here, boy, what are you doing?" he said angrily.

"Searching," answered Joe, preparing to come down.

The detective assisted him to the floor and looked at him sharply.

"Have you the coins?" he asked.

"No," replied Joe truthfully, "but I think Mr. Miles has."

With this he started down-stairs, and the de-

tective followed. In the room below stood Mr. Miles, examining the coins.

"Here they are," he said to the detective. "Every one of them."

The detective seemed not over pleased at this announcement. "Who found them?" he asked.

"Joe Russell here," said Mr. Miles. "They were in the attic."

"Well, that ends this job," asserted the detective grimly. "Now, we must all go to headquarters."

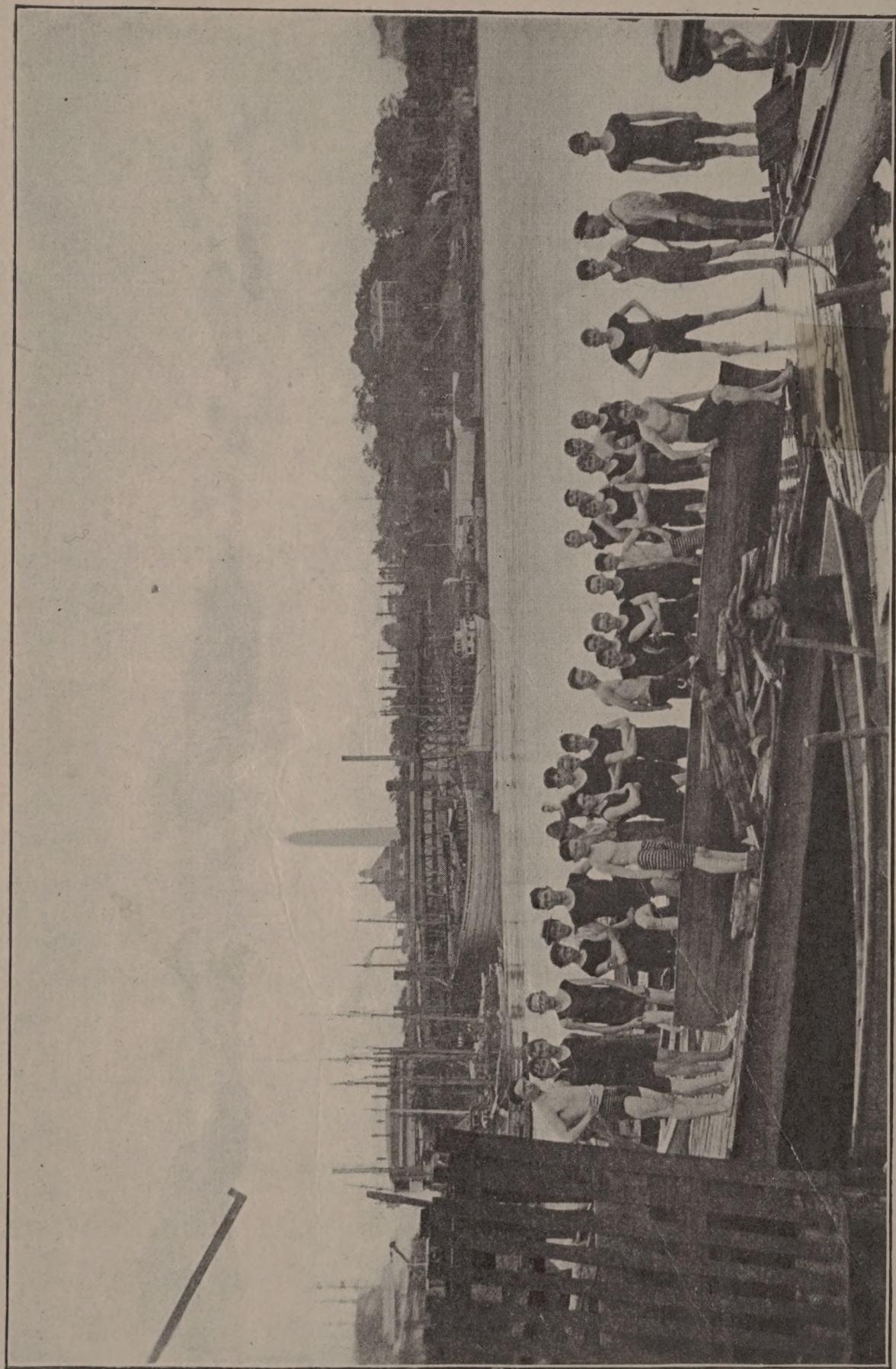
The automobiles were summoned and the entire party went to headquarters, where Mr. Miles established his right to the coins. The thieves were locked up, pending further action.

"How did you think of rapping on the gas pipe, Joe?" asked Mr. Kinsman, as they were taken to the rectory in the machine.

"Oh, mother always lets us know when breakfast is ready in that way. It sounds all over the house."

They found all the other members of Mr. Hoyt's party at the rectory and for an hour there was rejoicing. Every detail of the capture was recounted.

The next morning Mr. Ross at Portage received a telegram from Mr. Miles that removed a burden of anxiety from his heart.



There came the usual demand for a swim. See page 242.

CHAPTER XXI

PAT'S MISTAKE AND A MISUNDERSTANDING

AT breakfast on Thursday morning it was discovered that the news of the capture had leaked out.

Tom and Joe were compelled to tell the story of the pursuit of the agent. John Kent's absence at night had been noticed of course, and several of the boys had suspected that something unusual was going on. So great was the desire to hear the details that they were compelled to give the whole story that the curiosity of the company might be satisfied. Though no one mentioned it outright, there was evidence of the fact that they sympathized with the relief felt by Ed Ross, who was jubilant.

Mr. Hoyt came over to the camp and related the incident of his arrest. He had taken the affair good-naturedly and said he felt some satisfaction in the part he had taken to capture the thieves.

Mr. Sumner had consulted with Mr. Kinsman, and found that he might be spared for a short time in the afternoon, so he called Pat who was near.

"Pat, will you run over to Mr. Hoyt's boarding-house for me?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Please tell Miss Hoyt to meet me at the Corcoran Gallery, on the steps, at two this afternoon."

Pat set off at once. The company would soon start and he did not wish to be left behind, so he did not delay. When he reached the house in which Mr. Hoyt's party had found hospitality, he discovered Miss Marion Hoyt upon the porch. Pat approached her and raising his hat, delivered his message with military decorum:

"Miss Hoyt, the second warden presents his compliments and asks if you will please meet him on the steps of the Corcoran Gallery at two this afternoon."

"Thank you. Please tell him that I shall be glad to meet him there."

So Pat departed, entirely unaware that he had delivered the message to Marion instead of Catherine Hoyt, as Mr. Sumner intended; and Marion, thinking that the second warden was Mr. Jackson, was pleased at what she believed to be his thoughtfulness in arranging for her a visit to the Corcoran Gallery.

The company then prepared for one of the most enjoyable outings of the trip. A great automobile drew up before the camp. It was a sight-seeing

car chartered for the morning, and so large that it accommodated the whole company and the camp followers.

By means of this car the boys were able to see the beautiful residential section of Washington. The clean, broad streets, free from telephone poles and bordered by splendid homes, radiate in every direction, like the spokes of a wheel from several centers. The city abounds in small parks formed by the interlacing avenues. The homes of men distinguished in the annals of the country were pointed out by the efficient guide.

Finally the car drew up before the Washington Monument, the lofty structure erected to the "Father of His Country."

The monument had been seen from a distance constantly during the days spent in Washington. The sight of the graceful shaft rising above its surroundings had greeted their eyes from Arlington. Now they were approaching it for a nearer and better acquaintance. Only when beneath it did they realize its immense size. Rising into the air five hundred and fifty-five feet, it seemed to pierce the clouds and touch the blue sky.

"What a contrast it is to the elaborate monuments that have been erected to other men," said Mr. Jackson.

"Listen while I read from the guide-book," exclaimed Mr. Kinsman. "Here is an extract from

the oration of Robert C. Winthrop at the laying of the corner-stone:

“ ‘Lay the corner-stone of a monument which shall adequately bespeak the gratitude of the whole American people to the illustrious Father of his Country. Build it to the skies; you cannot outreach the loftiness of his principles! Found it upon the massive and eternal rock; you cannot make it more enduring than his fame! Construct it of the peerless Parian marble; you cannot make it purer than his life! Exhaust upon it the rules and principles of ancient and modern art; you cannot make it more proportionate than his character!’

“ ‘The monument is faced with pure white marble,’ continued Mr. Kinsman. “ ‘It is one of the highest pieces of masonry in the world. We shall see on the inside the stones sent by various organizations as tributes to Washington.’”

“ ‘May we climb up the stairs?’ ” asked Jimmie, as they entered.

“ ‘There are nine hundred steps,’ cautioned the warden. “ ‘Go if you care to. It’s the only way to see the inscriptions on the stones.’”

Up the stairs flocked the company.

“ ‘There are one hundred and seventy-nine marked stones,’ said Mr. Kinsman to those near him. “ ‘They were sent from all over the world, and represent every sort of organization. Greece

sent a block of marble from the Parthenon and Switzerland a stone from the chapel of William Tell."

When they reached the top they found the walls pierced with eight windows, through which they were able to see a vast panorama, with Washington as a center. The mountains of Virginia were clearly visible and the winding course of the Potomac, which lay like a silver ribbon upon a green-sward, was followed for miles.

The boys studied the panorama a long time, identifying buildings and points of interest. The descent was made in the elevator.

After lunch they went to the treasury department. Here they became intensely interested in all the processes by which the government protects and yet uses the nation's money. They visited the redemption department where old money is received to be replaced by new.

"This division receives for redemption an average of one million dollars a day of worn-out paper money," said the guide. "It is examined, counted, marked and tied into packages. These are cut into two lengthwise, by the great blade of the cutting machine. One package is sent to the office of the Secretary of the Treasury and the other to the register's office. In each the half sheets are counted. If the count is correct, they are then sent to the macerator for destruction. This is a huge

receptacle of steel, fitted with closely set knives, which grind the paper money into pulp as they revolve. The pulp thus produced is sold. On an average we destroy one million dollars a day, but on one occasion the authorities in charge put one hundred and fifty-one million dollars into the macerator."

The system of guarding the Treasury was explained also. The vaults are a network of electric signal wires. A force of seventy men patrol the building night and day. The officer in charge is in constant touch with the police department and Fort Myer.

In one department Art was permitted to hold for a moment a package containing one million dollars in actual money.

"What would you do if they gave it to you, Art?" asked Brewer.

"Oh, I suppose I would be an Oliver Twist, like many rich people."

"How's that, Art?"

"Crying for more."

"I would buy an automobile," said Dick.

"I would secure a substitute, same as men do in war time, to go to school for me," asserted Pat.

With increasing interest they visited each division.

After lunch Mr. Sumner left the company and went to the gallery. As it was half an hour before

Miss Catherine was expected, he made a brief inspection of the building, in order that he might more easily show her its treasures. He began to realize that it would take many days to examine with real appreciation the works of art that have been collected in the noble building. He could only glance hurriedly at the casts from ancient sculpture, the originals of which are among the chief treasures of the most famous galleries of Europe. He was fascinated by the statue of "The Last Days of Napoleon," representing that august figure seated in a chair and enveloped in a robe. The look of concentration on his face was significant of a mind rehearsing in memory the affairs of a mighty past.

Mr. Sumner looked at his watch. It was nearly two and he hastened to the outer steps to await Miss Catherine. He did not notice a young lady who from a little distance watched Mr. Sumner as he stood before the statue of Napoleon.

Catherine had not arrived. Mr. Sumner paced up and down the sidewalk, every few minutes glancing at his watch. It was some fifteen minutes after the hour. It was not like Catherine to be late. Slowly the minutes passed and Mr. Sumner became restless. Had she forgotten? Surely she had the message, for Pat had reported to him.

Three o'clock! He would wait no longer. He

could not find the company now. He would go back to camp.

Disappointed and somewhat chagrined, the warden took the street car and was soon on his way to Georgetown. He went into the empty house and up the stairs to the room used for headquarters and prepared to write a letter.

He was aroused by voices in the hall below. Some one had entered.

"We can leave the notes right here with the other mail."

He recognized the voice of Miss Giddings.

"You girls are quite sure the men can come at that hour?"

It was the rector who spoke. Mr. Sumner did not intend to listen, but he could not fail to overhear what was said.

"Oh, yes. It will be loads of fun. All the girls are to wear masks."

"But they will know you," asserted the rector.

"No, indeed. We have all sorts of disguises. I am going to wear that old colonial gown. I have given Catherine Hoyt my brown domino."

"What about the younger girls?"

"We are finding gowns for them, too."

The rector and his daughter had evidently accomplished their errand, for they left the house.

Mr. Sumner's curiosity got the better of him and he went down-stairs to discover what notes had

been left. He found one addressed to himself from the rector and his wife, asking his presence at the rectory from nine to eleven that same evening.

"So!" thought Mr. Sumner, "they are to have a party, and the girls are to be masked and they will try to fool us. Let me see, Miss Giddings will loan Catherine Hoyt a brown domino. I may discover from the brown domino why she failed to be at the gallery this afternoon."

There was a note addressed to each of the other wardens. When the company returned to camp, Mr. Kinsman discovered in his note a request that Captain Warren, Lieutenant Harding and four others named with equal ceremony, namely Joe, Pat, Art Miles and John Kent, be permitted to go to the party at the rectory from nine to eleven.

The wardens held a consultation and decided that all might accept the invitation. The camp after nine o'clock could be left in the hands of Mr. Hobart the photographer, and Dr. Wooster. There was no more restlessness at night, as the boys were only too eager to get to sleep after the exhausting day spent in sight-seeing.

Mr. Hoyt's party welcomed their invitation from the rectory and prepared to meet the conditions. Each was requested to assume a masquerade habit. Catherine noticed that Marion did not seem as enthusiastic over the party in the late afternoon

as she had been at noon when the invitations came.

"What's the matter, Marion? Are you tired?"

"No."

"Now come, Marion, don't be cross."

"I am not cross."

"Did you walk a good deal to-day?"

"No," answered Marion, pretending to be busy with her gown.

"Where were you this afternoon, Marion? We missed you."

"I went to the Corcoran Gallery."

"Oh! did Mr. Jackson take you?"

"No."

"But I thought you planned to go together."

"Well, I went alone," and the annoyed young lady gave a defiant toss of her head. "I saw Mr. Sumner there, too, but he didn't see me."

"Mr. Sumner!" exclaimed Catherine, "why — why — was he there alone?"

"He seemed to be."

"I thought he couldn't get away from the boys," and the perplexed Catherine dropped her work and looked with ill concealed disappointment at her sister.

"Well, he did get away. He was there."

"It was too hot a day for me to go to an art gallery," said Catherine with decision.

"It wasn't very hot," Marion assured her.

"You know it was hot," answered Catherine rather sharply.

"Now come, Catherine, don't be cross."

"I am not cross."

The girls looked soberly at each other for a moment and then broke into laughter. They said no more of the visit to the gallery, but Marion determined that Mr. Jackson should explain why he did not make his appearance, and Catherine determined that Mr. Sumner should explain why he did make his appearance without her.

"Have you decided upon your costume, Catherine?"

"Yes, I shall wear the blue domino Molly Giddings loaned me. She intended to wear a colonial dress, but she finally decided to use the brown domino."

So, chatting over their costumes, they made ready for the evening's frolic.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MASKED PARTY AT THE RECTORY

A FEW minutes after nine the wardens and the six boys left the camp and made their way along the quiet streets to the rectory. They were greeted by the rector and his wife and conducted to the large living-room. Here they found Mrs. Marshall and Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt.

"I have been asked by my daughter," began the rector, "to explain that the young ladies will be down-stairs in a moment. When they come, each of you is to request the pleasure of a conversation with the one that strikes his fancy. If she consents, you will conduct your partner to one of several groups of chairs which have been placed in the rooms and there converse for five minutes on the topic 'How do you like Washington?' We are all ready," he called up the stairs.

From above there descended a long line of young ladies whose identity was completely concealed by masks and every sort of costume. There were several dominoes, a milkmaid, one colonial dame, a Japanese maid, and many other disguises.

The men hesitated, finding a choice very difficult. Mr. Sumner, however, sought out at once the brown domino and requested the privilege of a conversation. A muffled voice replied, granting the request. Mr. Sumner led his partner to a remote group of chairs. Others, profiting by his example, quickly did likewise, and very soon the room was filled with the buzz of earnest conversation.

Mr. Sumner quietly asked the brown domino the stated question: "How do you like Washington?"

"I am delighted with it," answered Molly Giddings, disguising her voice. "And you?"

"It is very attractive," he said in a formal way.

"You seem somewhat disturbed, Mr. Sumner?"

"See here, Miss Catherine, why did you not come to the Corcoran Gallery this afternoon?"

For a moment Miss Giddings almost displayed her surprise at being mistaken for Catherine Hoyt. But she quickly recovered, resolved to carry on the deception.

"Were you expecting me?"

"Certainly. I thought you had agreed to see the gallery with me."

"Really, Mr. Sumner, I remember no such agreement."

"But did we not talk it over at Mount Vernon?"

"If we did, I have forgotten it."

"In that case you must have thought my message this morning very strange."

Miss Giddings began to be a little alarmed. She might deceive Mr. Sumner into saying more than he would care to say to any one but Catherine.

"Oh, Mr. Sumner, let's say no more about it. We are wandering from the original subject."

Mr. Sumner, perplexed and dissatisfied with the interview, was yet unable to do other than accede to her request.

Mr. Jackson in the meantime had found Catherine, whom he mistook for Marion.

"How do you like Washington, Marion?" he asked.

"Very well, sir," answered Catherine sharply. "Why do you call me Marion?"

"I thought you were willing that I should."

"I mean, you think I am Marion?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, let me tell you this. Marion was at the Corcoran Gallery this afternoon, expecting a Mr. Jackson who had asked her to meet him there."

"What," almost shouted Mr. Jackson.

"Yes, and he failed to come."

"I didn't remember that we set any time, Marion. Did we?"

"You are assuming that I am Marion?"

"I know it. I am awfully sorry, but I did not

understand that we had set an hour. Were you really disappointed, Marion?"

"No," said Catherine. "I was not disappointed at all. I had a quiet afternoon."

Mr. Jackson began to explain, but Catherine trusted herself to say no more.

Pat had chosen a well disguised figure who he was sure was Elsie. It was Edith Stevens, Elsie's cousin.

"Oh, now, Miss Elsie, I'm glad to have a word with you alone. How do you like Washington?"

"Splendidly, Mr. Pat. Hasn't it been exciting? My heart has fairly bled for poor Joe all alone in that attic."

"Now, Miss Elsie, you needn't feel so bad for Joe. See how he's enjoying himself with that young lady yonder. Joe's a fickle lad."

"But wasn't it brave of him," continued Edith, "to go up there?"

"It was, indeed," admitted Pat. "But I'll tell you a secret, Miss Elsie. You know the coins belonged to Mr. Miles?" Edith nodded. "And you know, Miss Elsie, that he has a daughter Alice?" Edith nodded again.

"So there," announced Pat, with a tone of triumph, "that explains Joe's bravery."

"Oh, Mr. Pat. Is it really true?" and Edith's voice assumed a tone of anxiety.

"It's as true as that we're in Washington, as that this is Thursday, as that I'm a Young Crusader. It is," and Pat said it solemnly.

"What's as true as all that?" and Edith pretended greatest concern.

"That Mr. Miles has a daughter Alice," asserted Pat in convincing tones.

Joe was in earnest conversation. He had endeavored to find Elsie, and had hit upon Frances Giddings.

"Were you frightened in the attic, Mr. Joe?"

"Yes, I was. I was afraid I should never go to camp again."

"We were dreadfully excited when we heard about it."

"Let's talk about something else. When do you go home, Elsie?"

"I am thinking of staying here," answered Frances Giddings.

"How long?"

"Well, I have a chance to live here in Washington, and I have fully determined to do it."

Joe was startled.

"And won't you go back to Cleveland at all?"

"Not at all."

This news seemed to stop the flow of Joe's conversation.

Jimmie Harding had not made any mistake. He had chosen Louise Seymour and he knew it.

But he was not unwilling to have a little fun, so he called her Frances Giddings.

"Come, Miss Frances, we'll sit here. Isn't this gay?"

"Lovely," admitted Louise.

"What fun it must be to be entirely disguised and to talk with a lot of chaps who have no masks at all. But I know you very well, Miss Frances."

"I see how well you know me."

"Tom's been a good chooser, too. He's talking with Louise Seymour."

"Oh, is he?" questioned Louise.

"Yes. Fine fellow, Tom. He and Louise are good friends."

"How very nice," admitted Louise.

The others were likewise struggling with the situation. The rector's son had chosen Margaret Stevens and had talked with her about her husband, thinking she was Mrs. Kinsman. And John Kent was wholly perplexed. He did not have an idea who his partner was, and was persuaded to tell what a joke it was that Mr. Hoyt had been arrested. He was talking with Marion.

At last the bell rang and partners were exchanged. Miss Giddings slipped over to Catherine and asked her to go quietly to the kitchen for a moment. Here they exchanged dominoes, Catherine putting on the brown one which Molly Giddings took off.

The second grouping was as confused as the first. Several discovered their mistakes. Mr. Sumner had chosen Frances and she accidentally made known that her sister had worn the brown domino.

Mr. Sumner at once realized that he had made a mistake, so when the groups were changed again he sought out the brown domino, in order to correct it.

"Miss Giddings," he said, "I thought at first you were Catherine Hoyt. I find I was mistaken."

"Yes," said Catherine quietly.

"I sent a message to Miss Catherine this morning asking her to meet me at the gallery this afternoon. She didn't come. That's why I said what I did."

"Yes," murmured Catherine.

"I wished to explain to you, Miss Giddings."

"That's good of you, I am sure. Perhaps Miss Hoyt did not get the message."

"I am sure something occurred to prevent. I have not had a chance to speak to her. I wish you would tell me which one she is."

"Perhaps I will," said Catherine.

"We are very good friends and I do not want anything to come between us."

"She seems a passable girl," faintly said Catherine.

"More than that. She's a remarkable girl. You have noticed her charming personality and sympathetic heart?"

"No, I haven't, Mr. Sumner," said Catherine weakly.

"Well, Miss Giddings, I should be obliged if you would point her out."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Sumner. I will tell her to choose you for the next conversation."

Mr. Sumner agreed to it, thanking Miss Giddings as he believed.

When the signal came, he watched the brown domino. Miss Giddings did not seem in haste to notify Catherine, as the brown domino stood a little to one side while the others chose partners. At last all the others were seated and the brown domino approached Mr. Sumner. He fully expected to hear that she had been unable to notify Catherine.

"Well, here I am, Mr. Sumner."

"Did you notify Miss Catherine?" he asked.

"No."

He could not conceal his disappointment.

"I had a good reason," said the domino.

"May I ask what it is?"

For an answer she lifted her mask for a moment, and revealed not the features of Miss Giddings but those of Catherine Hoyt.

Mr. Sumner was content.

Finally all the young ladies unmasked and there was much confusion and explanation. Both Joe and Pat discovered that they had not talked with Elsie. Mr. Sumner and Mr. Jackson captured Pat, and in the presence of Catherine and Marion Hoyt he was cross-questioned.

"Pat," said Mr. Sumner, "did I give you a message to deliver this morning?"

"Yes, sir. I think it was this morning. Time goes so fast —"

"Never mind that, Pat. What was the message?"

"Well it ran something like this: 'Our warden presents his compliments to Miss Hoyt and would she meet him at the front door of the picture gallery this afternoon if it don't rain.'"

"To whom did you give it, Pat?"

"Why, to Miss Hoyt."

"Which one?"

Pat looked at both. With a bow and a sweep of the hand he indicated Marion.

Every one laughed. The perplexing situation was made clear.

"Pat," said Mr. Sumner, "you nearly got me into trouble. But I forgive you as it has helped to clear up several matters."

"I was worried a bit about it afterward when I

got to thinking it over at luncheon. But I am glad it's turned out all right."

"Yes, it's turned out all right, Pat. Hasn't it, Catherine?"

"It has, indeed," said Catherine.

The entire group from the camp escorted Mr. Hoyt's party to their boarding-house, after they had taken leave of the rector and his family. They then turned their footsteps toward the camp. All were in high spirits. The boys were plotting to elude the sentries, but the wardens cautioned them to remember that they were officers and such conduct would be bad for camp discipline.

Pat was feeling particularly courageous.

"I believe I could carry them off, one by one."

But as this was forbidden, he turned his attention to other devices. He saw across the street a huge bush, which cast a dark shadow over a large portion of the yard in which it stood. Pat saw a chance to fool his comrades.

"There's some one over there in that shadow," suddenly said the imaginative boy, pretending to be alarmed.

All stopped and looked.

"I'll get him out," said the brave Pat, starting across the street.

He went into the yard shouting: "Get out of there."

To his great surprise a burly figure darted out

from the shadow and, dashing past the frightened boy, ran down the street.

Pat ran back to the others with great speed.

"Why didn't you catch him, Pat?" asked Miles.

"Catch him!" faltered Pat, "he almost caught me. I'll avoid dark pockets after this. That fellow carried the joke too far."

Every one laughed at Pat's dismay.

All was quiet at camp when they answered the challenge of the alert sentry. Mr. Hobart and Dr. Wooster were in headquarters.

"We have had a peaceful evening," reported the doctor. "Mr. Hobart and I have been telling fishing stories."

"Yes, and the doctor told me the same one I told a friend of his last year," added Mr. Hobart. "It's queer how the same thing can happen to so many men in the same season."

"Well, I have heard many fishing stories," said the doctor, "but I never heard anything equal one of Mr. Hobart's. He has been telling me that he has a cottage on a lake near Portage. There are lots of blue gills in the lake, but few bass. Mr. Hobart says he has many visitors and he always takes them fishing. In order to promote his reputation as a fisherman he has a trained bass in the lake. Hobart gets his party into a boat, goes to the middle of the lake and rings a bell. He then throws out a prepared hook which has no barb,

baited with a piece of rubber resembling a minnow. The trained bass seizes the minnow and Hobart pulls him in. The fish lets go and the lucky fisherman puts him in a pail tied to the boat, and sunk in the water. The fish escapes through the bottom of the pail, which is opened by a spring.

“After about five minutes the bass takes hold again. This operation is repeated until Hobart has caught him half a dozen times while the other visitors may have caught a blue gill or two. When Hobart draws in the pail he pretends to be much chagrined to find that all his fish have escaped. But his reputation as a fisherman has grown so that he is known far and wide about Portage. This is the first time he has disclosed the secret. So don't give him away. His luck brings him many visitors.”

“I should think it would be rather expensive to entertain so many, simply in order to fool them with a trained bass,” said Mr. Kinsman, after the laugh over the story had subsided.

“Oh, that's part of the scheme,” said the doctor. “Hobart sells each one a rubber minnow and makes more than his expenses each season.”

“I have a few here,” said Mr. Hobart. “I sold one to the doctor before he caught the point of the story, and if you would care to buy them I will make a reduction —”

But all fled before the genial photographer could finish his sentence.

Within a short time all were asleep, except the quietly moving sentries, who with steadfast watchfulness kept guard over the silent camp.

CHAPTER XXIII

FROM WASHINGTON TO PORTAGE

ON Friday morning an unusual privilege was granted to the boys. They were permitted to go where they wished. The five men in the party agreed to accompany the various groups. It had been impossible to see all the various places of interest and nearly every boy had some preference among those not yet visited.

"Where do you want to go, Tom?" asked Joe.

"To the Zoological Park."

"That suits me," said Joe.

It seemed to suit many of them. They spent a delightful morning in the beautiful tract of land devoted to the collection and preservation of the national fauna.

Others desired to go to the Patent Office. They were somewhat disappointed in this, as they had expected to see models of all the articles for which patents had been granted by the government, but many of the models have been distributed to institutions throughout the country.

Others visited the Post-office Department. Here the dead-letter office is of the greatest interest. The guide gave them some startling statistics.

"There were nearly six million unclaimed letters last year in our land. Nearly forty thousand had no address at all."

"Would you mind looking," asked Pat, "to see if one of mine is among them? I sent a letter last March and I haven't had an answer."

But the guide declined to make the search.

At noon the company gathered at the camp. They were to break camp that day and start for Portage on a train leaving Washington late in the evening. At dinner the camp followers seemed to be having an unusually merry time. Ralph Simpson was the center of their attention.

"Come on, Ralph," said John Kent, "tell us about it."

"There's nothing much to tell," answered Ralph.

"Oh, yes, there is, and you might as well tell us now, for we'll give you no rest."

Ralph laughed. "I suppose I might as well give you the whole story, if you are going to be so persistent."

Ralph took out his pocket-book and drew from it an envelope. Taking out a sheet of note-paper he held it out to Kent, saying as he did so: "Just before I left Portage I received this note from a

friend who wished me to get the bearer a position in our factory. Read it aloud."

John read as follows:

"DEAR MR. SIMPSON: The bearer of this note desires to consult with you concerning a position. He is a married man with one child and any favor you may show him will be appreciated.

"Yours,

"L. K."

"That note," continued Ralph, "was the beginning of my trouble."

"Tell us the rest of it, Ralph," urged the others.

By this time Mr. Jackson and a few of the boys had gathered about to hear the story.

"My father has a third cousin in Washington," continued Ralph. "Father gave me a letter of introduction which I happened to put in the same pocket with this note. Last night I called upon our relative. I had never seen any of the family, but I knew it consisted of father, mother and two daughters.

"I found the house with no difficulty. A servant came to the door when I rang the bell. I asked for Mr. and Mrs. Simpson. I was debating in my mind whether or not to send in my letter of introduction or wait until they came to the hall, when the servant asked my name. That settled it. The

letter might as well be taken in at once, as I had no card.

"Very soon an elderly lady appeared and with her one of the daughters. They looked at me in a very peculiar way and did not seem to show any cousinly interest in me. The mother asked me to be seated in the library.

" 'I am sorry that Mr. Simpson is not at home,' she said, 'but he is expected any minute.'

" 'I am very glad to find you at home, Mrs. Simpson,' I said. 'Father has often spoken of you.'

" 'Indeed,' she said rather coolly, 'I do not think I know your father.'

" 'No, he said he had never seen you.'

"The young lady to whom I had not been introduced, then put in a question, 'Have you lived in Washington long?'

"I was somewhat surprised but answered: 'No, I am just visiting here for a few days. I shall return to-morrow night.'

"The mother then resumed the questions. 'I assume, then, that you are in no immediate difficulty.'

"This did not seem to me a very cordial way of receiving a visit from a member of the family. I wondered if she thought I had called because I wanted to borrow some money. But I answered: 'Oh, no, Mrs. Simpson, I am getting on very well. But father wanted me to see you.'

"The daughter now took a turn. 'You seem quite young?'

"That startled me. I thought I might venture to have a little fun myself.

" 'Are you Miss Elizabeth?' I asked.

" 'Yes.' The answer was very short.

" 'Father told me that we are about the same age. I was born in February and you in November of the same year.'

"It was her turn to be surprised.

" 'Your father seems to have unusual knowledge of us,' said the mother rather sharply. But strange to say the daughter did not take the matter so seriously.

"I was beginning to feel very uncomfortable and was wondering if there had been a family quarrel when Miss Elizabeth asked the crushing question: 'How old is your baby?'"

As Ralph spoke these words a roar of laughter went around the table.

"Go on, Ralph," urged Mr. Jackson.

"This was the final blow. I was saved from replying by the entrance of Mr. Simpson. I arose and stood there like a blockhead. Mrs. Simpson handed the note to her husband, who read it, then looked at me.

" 'Whose initials are these?' he asked, holding the note so I could see it.

"Great guns! I had given the wrong note, the one Kent has there.

"I reached in my pocket and got the letter of introduction and presented it with a stammering explanation.

"It did not take two minutes for that family to thaw out to the most cordial group of relations I ever saw, and I am going there for dinner to-night. That's the whole story."

"You are very devoted to such elderly kinsfolk," said Kent, amidst the laughter.

"Don't forget about February and November, John," suggested Mr. Jackson, by way of explanation.

It was with real regret that the company made its preparations to leave its camp at Georgetown. Owing to the watchful care of Dr. Wooster, there had been no serious illness to mar their pleasure, and every one was in good spirits. The trunks were packed, the tents put into their cases and the yard cleaned.

After supper the company marched to the rectory, where all the visitors were gathered. In a short speech Mr. Kinsman thanked the rector and his family and all the guests for their aid in making the camp so enjoyable. The rector responded in a happy speech, complimenting the boys on their good behavior.

The special car was to be attached to a train leav-

ing Washington at eleven o'clock. The company spent the evening at the Congressional Library and reached the station about ten. As Mr. Jackson went out to the car to see that all was ready, he was stopped by a policeman.

"Are you one of the officers in command of these boys?" asked the officer.

Mr. Jackson said that he was.

"Well, the police have had an eye on the boys, and they have reported that no more orderly or better disciplined set of youngsters ever visited Washington," said the officer, saluting.

When this was reported to the company, the boys were much pleased with their record and proud that they had brought commendation to the name of the Young Crusaders.

At last the car was ready. The boys entered and began to prepare for bed. They entertained one welcome visitor before they left. The senator from Ohio, who had been so diligent in securing privileges for the company, entered the car, accompanied by a porter carrying a great box of sandwiches, a very welcome gift to the boys, from the senator's family. Amidst cheering they waved him a farewell just as the train moved out of the station.

The contrast between the start for Washington and the journey homeward was marked. The youthful soldiers, wearied with their strenuous days, went to sleep at once. Before Baltimore was

reached, the wardens inspected each section and not a single boy was awake. But in every car the window shade was raised, indicating that they had been watching the lights of the city as the train sped on its journey. The wardens pulled the shades so that they would not be aroused by the light in the morning and went to their state-room.

"Well, we did it," said Mr. Sumner, as he threw himself wearily into the seat.

"Yes, and if we have a safe journey we shall deliver every boy to his parents to-morrow safe and sound," added Mr. Kinsman.

"It's been the greatest experience of my life," said Mr. Jackson. "It seems almost like a dream."

"We could never have done it had we not had the discipline of a camp," declared Mr. Sumner. "We ought to be proud of those boys."

"We are," answered Mr. Kinsman, "and I am proud, too, of the fact that we three men could work in such harmony under so many trying conditions. It has been a pleasure to co-operate with you both, and I am sure that we shall remember this trip with satisfaction all our days."

"You may be sure of that, John," said Frank Sumner seriously. "And I feel pleased with the help of Mr. Hobart and Dr. Wooster. They have been valuable companions."

So for two hours the wardens discussed the events

of the trip. It was very late when the porter made up the berths, and they sank into slumber.

The daylight ride through the mountains was delightful.

"What's the Horseshoe Bend?" asked Adam Lesser of Pat, as the train neared that famous bit of landscape.

"Why, Adam, I am surprised at your ignorance of history. It's where Paul Revere and Ichabod Crane ran a race on horseback."

"I know better than that, Pat."

"Then, Adam, you were taking up my valuable time asking unnecessary questions?"

At Pittsburgh the company had a two hours' wait and they were marched through the crowded streets to a restaurant, where they had dinner.

Late in the afternoon the Young Crusader Special ran into the station at Portage. The station was crowded with the families and friends of the boys. Military discipline was for a time abandoned, as the boys greeted their parents and brothers and sisters. Finally the line was formed and, headed by the drum corps, which had again volunteered to act as escort, the company marched to the High School.

The street before the school had been decorated with flags by the enthusiastic neighbors. The boys felt that they might be victors returning from war.

After a little speech of congratulation, Mr. Kinsman said the single word: "Dismissed."

The trip to Washington was finished.

The wardens upon whom the responsibility for the boys' welfare had rested for so many days confessed to each other that without their charges that evening they felt a sense of loneliness.

At fifty supper tables that night, fifty families sat in thankfulness listening to as many accounts of the experience of the youthful soldiers at the nation's capital.

CHAPTER XXIV

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

AGAIN the summer vacation was before our boys. A few of them secured positions, while others enjoyed the days of leisure. The Seven met one day in Jimmie's barn and discussed the journey and their prospects.

"Only one more year of school," said Jimmie. "Then what are we to do?"

"I shall go to college," said Art. "Father told me last night that I might go."

"I wouldn't let that chance pass," asserted Tom.

"Nor I," said Joe.

"What are we to do this summer?" asked Pat. "We ought to stir up something. Has the Secret Service resigned?"

"No, only waiting for something to turn up."

"Well, while we're waiting, let's go and play baseball."

Mr. Kinsman had had a talk with Mr. Miles and it was decided that Art should go to Kenyon a year from September. This decision aroused the interest of the others. Pat went to his father.

"Father, are we a pretty long-lived race?"

"Why, yes," answered Mr. McGuire. "Your grandfathers are still living."

"Do you think I know enough to last me all my days?"

Mr. McGuire looked sharply at his son.

"I am sure I don't know how much knowledge ye conceal, Pat. There's little enough showing."

"I have felt so myself, father. Now you wouldn't let Mr. Miles have the advantage of you in providing his son with education, would you, father?"

"What do ye want, Pat?"

"I want to go to college next year."

Mr. McGuire gasped.

"You, Pat! Why ye never seemed to like books, and all those things. Ye said algebra was nothing but a disarranged alphabet."

"Well, since I have been to Washington, I feel a yearning to be president, and I ought to go to college."

"Well, my boy, maybe ye ought. I'll tell ye what I'll do. If ye can put yourself through the first year in college to show me ye're in earnest, I'll stand by ye till ye graduate."

"Hurray," shouted Pat.

"But ye should have one hundred dollars to start with, and ye have a whole year to earn it. That's final."

"Father," asserted Pat solemnly, "you may prepare to kiss me good-by a year from next September. I'll hate to leave home," added Pat wistfully, "but I owe it to my family to be president."

"Where do you want to go, Pat?"

"To Kenyon."

"Then good luck to ye, my son," and Mr. McGuire somewhat proudly laid his arm over his boy's shoulder.

Pat's determination aroused the spirit of the other boys. Jimmie Harding made up his mind to ask his father to allow him to prepare for Kenyon. Pat and Art, with Jimmie, laid their plans before Mr. Kinsman.

"You could not make a better decision," he assured them. "But you must work hard this year and enter Kenyon with a good record."

"We shall have one more camp with the Young Crusaders before we must resign, shall we not?"

"Yes, indeed. The wardens have already made some plans for next summer. We have an original idea for a summer outing and we believe we can carry it out."

"Would you mind telling us about it, Mr. Kinsman?"

"I am not quite ready to announce it yet, but it will be unlike either of our camps and yet will have all the enjoyable features of both. Yes, you

will have one more good time before you go to Kenyon. What about Tom and Joe? ”

Tom and Joe were thinking about it. They met one morning in Colonel Russell's attic and the question was discussed.

“ Let's ask Uncle Russell,” suggested Joe.

So to the library they went.

“ What's up now, boys? ” asked the colonel. “ I am feeling pretty well this morning and I am prepared for the unexpected.”

“ Uncle, would it be right for Tom and me to sell our bank stock and go to college? ”

“ You could not do a better thing with it. But it would not take you through college.”

“ No, but it would help, and we could go a year at least and then we might find a way to continue.”

“ Do it by all means. And if the Strategy Board will admit me as a member, I am sure we can devise a method to see you through four years,” and the colonel actually winked.

“ You are elected, Uncle,” said Joe, in tones filled with rejoicing, “ but we shall do our best to carry this through ourselves. We must go and ask our parents.”

An hour later they met again in the attic.

“ I am going to Kenyon,” shouted Joe as Tom appeared.

“ And I, too,” responded Tom, hitting Joe on the

back, "and Art and Jimmie and Pat. This is a good old world, after all."

"We must make the most of our senior year in High School, Joe."

"Yes, indeed, and if the Young Crusaders do not have a good time this year it will not be our fault."

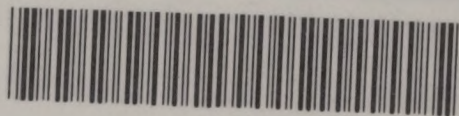
But how the boys spent the remainder of the summer and how Mr. Kinsman's plan for the following summer was carried out, and how Pat earned the money for college, and how eventually the boys went to Kenyon and what they did there, are not part of this story.

THE END.

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